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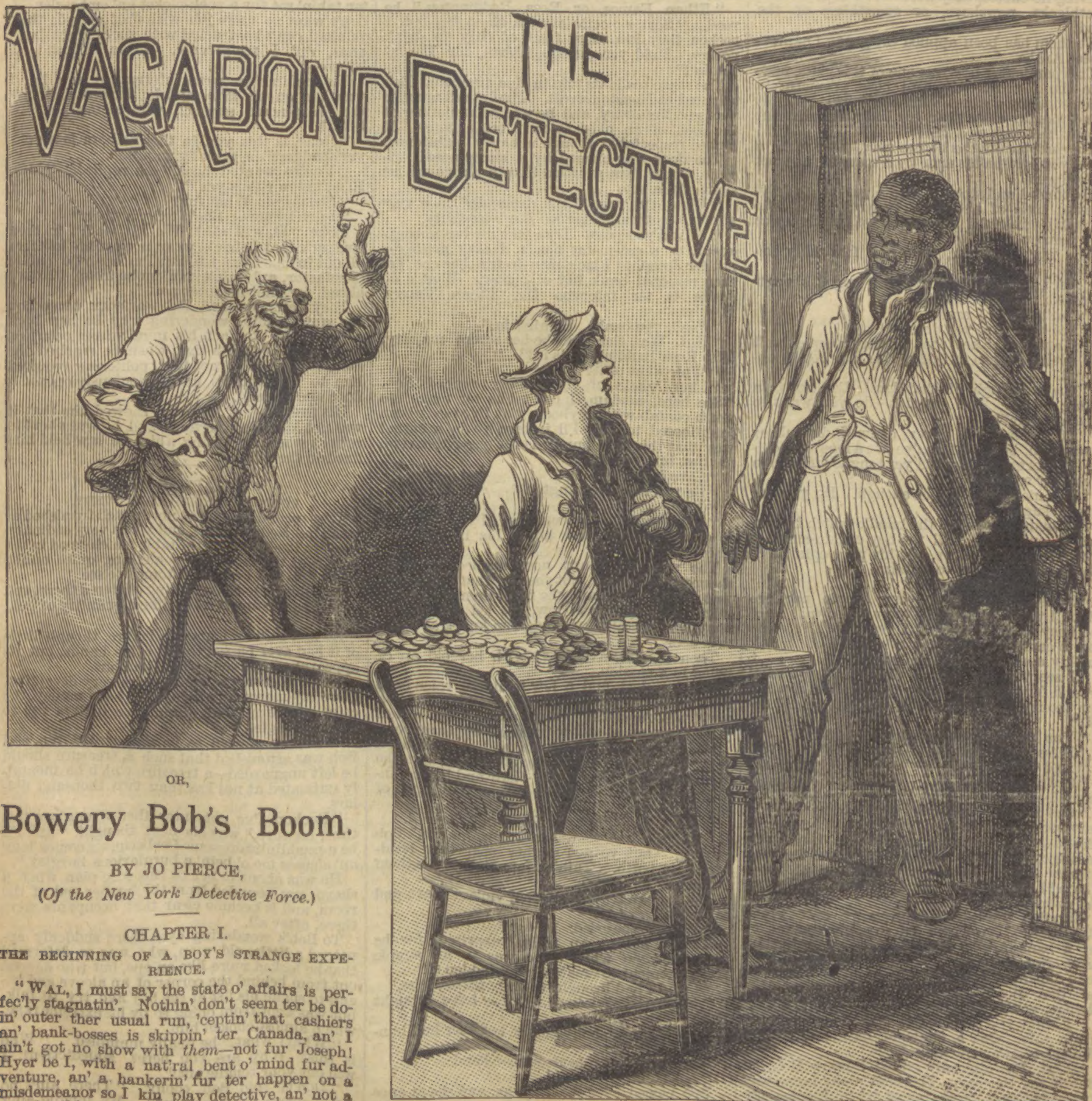
July 7, 1885.

Vol. XVI. Single Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 415.



OR,

Bowery Bob's Boom.

BY JO PIERCE,
(Of the New York Detective Force.)

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF A BOY'S STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

"WAL, I must say the state o' affairs is perfectly stagnatin'. Nothin' don't seem ter be doin' outer ther usual run, 'ceptin' that cashiers an' bank-bosses is skippin' ter Canada, an' I ain't got no show with them—not fur Joseph! Hyer be I, with a nat'ral bent o' mind fur adventure, an' a hankerin' fur ter happen on a misdemeanor so I kin play detective, an' not a measly thing turns up. It's hard lines, fer dock-fishin'."

A BURLY NEGRO SUDDENLY DARTED FORWARD AND CLOSED THE DOOR BEFORE BOWERY BOB COULD RETREAT, AND THEN PLACED HIS BACK AGAINST IT.

The person who thus lamented his ill-luck was a boy of about fourteen years.

He was standing on the sidewalk near Trinity Church, watching the double stream of people that flowed through Broadway, and regretting that none of them seemed to need his help as a detective.

He looked like anything except a person engaged in that business. Detectives are not supposed to be fourteen-year-old boys, much less such ragged young lads as this particular one.

We shall hear more about his detective business soon, however.

Whatever he was, it was plain he was no greeny. He had a face as sharp and shrewd as that of a rat, if we may use the comparison without disrespect. A clear-cut, wise face was his, intelligent and precocious beyond the average of his years, and yet thoroughly honest.

He was ragged, but he wore his tattered garments with a grace and dignity worthy of a duke, and more than one passer-by had smiled at sight of him.

New York is full of boys whose circumstances compel them to work hard as soon as they are large enough to perform any kind of labor. Having no choice, they become, in many cases, bootblacks, newsboys, or something of the kind.

To them has been applied the general name—street Arabs.

This particular boy was one of this class, and, like the rest, his wits had been prematurely sharpened by contact with the world until his mind was far older than his body, though that seemed as tough as a knot.

He was standing as before mentioned when a hand was laid on his arm by a man he had not before seen.

He turned and stood facing a rather flashily-dressed man of about thirty years, but who probably imagined himself as well made up as any man on Broadway.

The boy, however, was not favorably impressed.

"Here, young fellow, are you busy?" abruptly asked the new-comer.

"Can't ye see I am?"

"No; what are you doing?"

"Watchin' ter see that Trinity steeple don't fall over an' mash nobody," the boy coolly observed.

"That's enough of that kind; I'm not in a joking mood. The question—do you want to earn a dollar?"

"Ef I don't I'll never chaw India-rubber steak ag'in, boss. Ef you've got a lonesome dollar ter mortgage, jest roll yer tongue an' lemme inter ther scheme."

"The matter is simple enough. Do you see this package?"

The man pointed to the bundle which he carried in one hand. All the boy could see was a brown wrapping-paper, but his poor opinion of the stranger led him to inquire:

"Tain't dynamite, is it?"

"Nonsense! It is a very simple package which I want carried half-way up-town. I am too busy to go myself, and want to hire some boy to carry it. Will you take the job? Speak quickly now, for I am in a hurry."

"I see you be, but ye needn't be squintin' around fer any other chap, fer I'm ther boss fur yer money. Perdooce yer stamps, an' I'll be off."

"You know where Houston street is?"

"Bless yer boots, yes. Who don't?"

"And will you take the package faithfully?"

"See yer, mister, do I look like an emb'zzler or road-adjutant? W'at d'ye take me fer?"

"Oh! I think you're all right, but you see I have some bananas here for a friend, and I want him to get them as soon as possible. Here's the package, and here's a dollar—yes, and here's a quarter more. Take a stage and go at once. The odd change you can keep, but *don't open the package!*"

"Strikes me I don't impress ye over-favorable, boss. D'ye s'pose I'd ruin my reputation fer a banana, or a Havana, or even fer Susannah? Not any, fer Joseph! I am one o' ther solid business men o' Gotham, an' ef you'll go ter ther Board o' Trade, or Shoeblack Exchange, you'll find I am square all 'round."

"I know you're all right, boy; don't make so much talk. Get a stage at once and be off. Wait!—what's your name?"

"Wal, I'm ginerally called Bowery Bob, or Bob o' the Bowery. Ther rest o' my name was lost outer ther baggage-car when I come ter town, an'—"

"That'll do; that'll do. Be off, now!"

The man fairly shoved Bob away, and though

the latter was far from being pleased with his manner, he felt the money still in his hand and was not anxious to lose the job.

Accordingly, he obeyed the last direction and was soon seated in a stage and rolling up Broadway.

He looked back once, but his employer had already been swallowed up in the thick mass of humanity that crowded the sidewalk.

"I don't reckon I'll git inter ther detective biz by dealin' with him," thought the boy. "Ef I ain't lost ther faculty o' readin' character, he's a gent o' off-color. 'Twouldn't s'prise me a bit ef he's a bunco chap, or some sech crooked character. Wonder w'at made him so nervous? He kep' lookin' around ez though he 'spected a copper ter fall outer him, an' he was in a great passion ter git me away. Wal, that's a result o' bein' a crook. I don't 'spect I'd be more'n half happy ef I was one o' them kind o' cattle."

Bob sniffed at the package.

"Them bananas smell sorter good, an' I don't know ez it's so very odd that silk-tile chap was afeard I'd open ther bundle, but I ain't in that biz."

He looked at the card which had been given him.

"Ethan Eames, or Rosa Reddington," he read. "Sorter poetic names, them be, but I reckon they kin chaw fruit ef they do drink poetry. Hold yer breath, Ethan, fur I'm a-comin'!"

The stage made its trip in due time, and Bob alighted at Houston street. The desired number was not far away, and he was soon pulling at the bell of an old-fashioned brick house. It looked respectable, though not very high-toned.

The door was opened by a sharp-nosed servant, whose face grew positively vinegarish at sight of the boy.

"What d'ye want?" she demanded, in a way which somewhat disturbed Bob's placidity.

"W'at d'ye s'pose? D'ye take me fer a book-agent, or a gas-meter fiend? I ain't neither—not fer Joseph! I lack ther lip fur ther one an' ther national bank bill o' t'other. W'at I do desire is ter interwoo Mr. Ethan Eames, Esquire."

"Well, you can't. He ain't in."

"No? Wal, then, mebbe her serene majesty, Miss Rosa Reddington is in?"

"Wal, what of it?"

"Ther whole of it," calmly replied Bob. "See here, madam, I don't like ter make too much confab with anybody w'at I've never been interdoosed to, but I'll inform ye in a casual way that this hyar bundle is fur one o' them two parties, him or her."

"Give it to me!"

"Be you Miss Reddington?"

"No."

"Then you must excuse me. I was ter give it only ter them, and biz is biz in 1885, yer know."

The woman's sharp nose seemed to grow sharper with anger, but she saw that Bob meant just what he said, and she made no more useless talk. Bidding him follow, she led the way up one flight of stairs and bade him knock at a certain door.

Then she bounced away with her old air of being in a passion.

Bob knocked, and a low feminine voice bade him enter. He obeyed, and found himself in a very well-furnished room, alone with a tall young woman of rather imposing appearance.

She looked as handsome and elegant as a tigress, as Bob mentally expressed it, but she was buried deep in an easy-chair and looked indolent and dull. Her eyes expanded at sight of Bob, however.

"Oh! I thought it was Hannah," she said.

"That's whar ye was mistook, ma'am," Bob replied, "but ye got mighty near ther head-center o' truth. 'Tain't Hannah, but it's them bananas."

The woman made a sudden, violent start and sat erect.

"What?" she cried.

It was Bob's turn to be surprised, for he could not see what there was in his simple announcement to create such a sudden stir.

"I said I had brought them bananas, miss."

"You?" she exclaimed. "You have brought them?"

"Right ye be, an' you kin bet ther hull bundle on't."

Miss Reddington held out her hand.

"Let me see!" she said.

Bob passed over the package, and she at once broke the wrapper enough to prove his statement.

"Where is Jack?" she then asked.

The boy understood this question to refer to the sender of the bananas.

"Can't say. He give 'em to me an' dusted."

"Where was he?"

"Down by Trinity Church."

"And you mean to say that he allowed you to bring these all the way here—*alone?*"

"Sart'in he did. Why not? Ain't I s'ponsible fur a few measly bananas? I s'pose ef I had on a striped suit an' a handcuff, you'd take me ter be jest out o' Sing Sing."

Miss Reddington looked at him for a moment in silence, and then suddenly laughed.

"Do not feel offended," she said; "I am not questioning your honesty. Still, I don't—but never mind. You can go."

"Correct. Ef you find any o' ther fruit mis-sin' yer kin apply ter me. My name is B. Bowery, Esquire, an' I hev a peanut stand on ther classic street arter which I'm named. Call thar. You may not find me in, but Stumpy, my pardner, will be thar, an' you'll find him well-roasted an' three quarts to ther pint. I hev ther honor ter bid you good-day. Farewell!"

And Bob bowed himself out with the dignity of one who feels that his honor has been unjustly questioned.

"Mighty queer why folks all o' a sudden git ter takin' me fur a pock-picket an' embezzler. I don't want no more job with *that* crowd; they thinks I can't be trusted with six or eight bananas, an' I reciprocate. I do, b'gosh! I b'lieve—"

His meditations were interrupted as a hand was laid on his arm, and he turned and saw the sharp-nosed servant, who seemed out of breath.

"Hello, is this you in ther flesh, or is it only yer shadder?" he genially inquired.

"You're wanted back," she replied. "Miss Reddington wants you."

"She does? What fur?"

"I don't know. She'll tell you that."

"She will, will she? Wal, it wa'n't in ther contract that I should wear my patent leathers all out in this hyer job, but I'm a sort o' public benefactor, an' I ain't goin' ter be mean. Heave ahead, an' pilot me inter port."

They returned, and Bob was soon ascending the stairs again, wondering why he had been called back. In fact, his mind was so occupied with such thoughts that when he reached the second floor he forgot that politeness required him to rap, and he unceremoniously opened a door and entered.

His first view of the room showed him that it was not Miss Reddington's, and he was about to retreat when something which he saw held him fixed to the spot.

CHAPTER II.

BOB'S SURPRISING DISCOVERY.

THIS second room was not so well furnished as was Miss Reddington's, and was a very ordinary place in itself, but on the table which stood in the middle of the room was something quite unlike what Bob had been accustomed to see.

A yellow pile of something glittered there, and looked to the amazed boy like a quantity of gold coins!

He had seen such money before, though little of it had ever passed through his hands, but its appearance was somewhat familiar.

Yes, unless appearances were very deceptive, there lay many dollars in good, hard money, the coins ranging from diminutive dollars up to sturdy "eagles."

The room seemed to be untenanted, too, and Bob was astonished that such a treasure should be left unguarded—a treasure which he mentally estimated at not less than two thousand dollars.

"Reckon I've got inter ther wrong nen this time, fer sure," was his next thought, "an' I'll be a-scuddin' afore some Cerberiuster comes 'long an' a'cuses me o' bein' a burglarious burglar."

He was about to act on this wise plan when a sharp cry sounded from the further end of the room, and it became clear that occupants were there, after all.

To Bob's wondering eyes there suddenly appeared a little, old man, who was so deformed that he looked more like an ape, but who danced out from behind the corner of an alcove and began to shake his fist at the boy and try to talk, but was kept from doing so by his extreme rage, which almost choked him.

"What! what!" he finally mumbled. "Who is this? Why are you here? Malediction! I will cut your tongue out!"

"Don't!" said Bob, coolly. "There ain't no sorter reason why ye should. My tongue ain't an article that would be o' any market value ter you, an' 'twould be mighty inconvenient ter me

ter be without it. I came in by an erroneous blunder, an' now I'll bid ye farewell an'—"

Bob was interrupted.

The old man had stamped on the floor, and a burly negro suddenly darted forward, closed the door before Bowery Bob could retreat, and then placed his back against it.

"Good! good!" cried the old man. "Now we have him! We will cut his tongue out. Nelva! Nelva!"

At the last call a girl emerged from the alcove—a girl of about fifteen years, though she was so small that one would have thought her not over twelve, at first sight.

"Here!" added the old man, "bring a knife—bring a knife. Malediction! we will cut this vagabond spy's tongue out!"

"Now, hold on, Cap," said the boy, still cool outwardly, though he was far from being pleased with his situation, "an' jest evolve ther idee that this hyar is a free country, an' that I hev got a vote in this int'restin' caucus. W'at sort o' a chromatic chap be you, anyhow? Reckon this hyar's ther Cannibawl Islands, hain't it? That's right, little gal, you freeze ter ther floor, an' keep on stayin'."

The last words were spoken because he saw that Nelva, as the girl seemed to be named, had not stirred, but stood looking from the old man to Bob, and then back again, deep trouble expressed on her face.

"Do you hear me?" shouted the old man, again stamping his foot.

"Yes, I hear you," the girl slowly replied.

"Then why don't you obey?"

"Because I can't do it. I have not sunk so low as to obey such an order. I will not get the knife."

"Hooray for our side!" put in Bob.

The old man, however, uttered a dog-like snarl and started for the alcove. Nelva darted in ahead of him, and in a moment more came a crash of glass. The villain paused as though amazed, and then Nelva reappeared, her face pale but calm.

"You'll have to look in the back-yard for the knife, Mr. Riddle," she said, steadily.

The old man almost choked with rage.

"Malediction!" he cried; "how dared you?"

"I don't know," she answered, "but I guess I've got where I don't care to live. Before I'll help you to do what you said, you may kill me!"

"Now, you hol' on right about hyar," said Bob. "Seein' ez how I'm a leadin' figger in this disturbance, I want ter exercise my jaw. W'at's ther racket hyar, anyhow? I've told ye once I'm inter this hyar coop by mistake. I wos ter call on Miss Reddington, ter wit, namely, an' I swung ther wrong door. W'at on't? I'm ready ter ambulate, I be, an' ye needn't make sech a row. B'gosh, ye've got more ears than a balky mule, you hev!"

Despite this unfavorable comment, the old man grew much calmer, and he turned to the giant negro.

"Jocko, did you leave that door unlocked?" he asked.

"Gorry, I reckon I must 'a' did so, Marse Riddle."

"I'll kill you for it."

The negro looked sober until Riddle's gaze was turned from him, and then grimaced.

In the meanwhile Bob's mind had been busy, and he had drawn a conclusion from this attempted secrecy, the rage and dismay of the old man in finding a stranger in his place, the humble appearance of these people, and the pile of what seemed to be gold coins on the table.

His conclusion was that the money was bogus, and that these people were counterfeiters.

The only point against this theory was the fact that the young girl, Nelva, did not look or act like a criminal, but it would not be strange if she was entirely under old Riddle's control.

"Reckon I've put my foot inter it this time," the boy thought, "but ef these cannibals think they kin keep a chap like me in hock they is way off their pedestal. It can't be did—not fer Joseph!"

Here old Riddle turned to him.

"Boy, who are you?"

"My name, august sache, is Samuel Samson Short, ez you kin diskriver by inquiry at City Hall. I'm known thar perfesh'nally, ez I furnish them with fresh-baked peanuts ev'ry day when biz is so they kin raise ther bullion."

"Why are you here?"

"I've tol' ye severial times that I'm here 'kase I made a blunder. Wanted ter find Miss Rosaton—Reddington, I mean—an' got inter ther wrong pew. Jest call her an' she'll give me a clean bill o' health."

"Miss Reddington, eh?"

"Yes."

"I will see her."

Riddle left the room, but Jocko remained by the door and there was no chance for Bob to escape. He employed his time with using his eyes freely, but without discovering anything new.

The pile of coins remained on the table, and looked as genuine as could be, but Bob did not change his opinion of them. He looked closely at Nelva. She was a very pretty girl, but she looked sad and weary, and all his sympathy went out to her.

There was now a shadow in her dusky eyes which he believed came of his own adventure, and after looking many times at him and the big negro alternately, she walked to the alcove and disappeared.

Bob was anxious to see what this place contained, but when he started to get a view of it he was stopped by Jocko, and as the negro was twice his size he had to obey him.

In a few minutes the door reopened and Riddle entered. His ugly face did not look any more amiable, but he nodded to Bob and said:

"I have seen Miss Reddington, and it is all right. You can go to her. Jocko, show him the room."

Bob did not care for the escort, but, thinking it best not to be obstinate, he said nothing.

It was at this juncture, when both the men were looking elsewhere, that Nelva came out of the alcove. She held something in her hand, and, seeing her chance, she tossed a bit of twisted paper on the sofa beside Bob.

The latter, seeing that she looked even more troubled than before, quickly interpreted the secret act, and gathered the paper up with quick but quiet skill.

Neither Riddle nor Jocko had seen this by-play, and, without any perceptible break in his movements, Bob followed the negro out of the room, putting the scrap of paper safely away.

Jocko conducted him to another door and pushed it open.

"Hyar's de place!" he said.

Bob took one step forward, but he then saw that it was not the place. This new room was dark, having no window, and he saw at one glance that Miss Reddington was not there.

He tried to turn, but Jocko gave him a sudden push which sent him half-way into the room, and then walked in after him.

"Set down!" he directed.

"Thank you, but I don't keer ter set. Allow me ter ask whar my friend, Miss Reddington, is?"

"She'll come purty soon."

"She will, hey?"

"Yes."

"Wal, I don't keer ter loaf 'round hyar an' do nothin', fer I've got an engagement wi' ther mayor which order be a'tended to. This is her biz, not mine, an' ef she can't come I'd prefer ter go."

"You can't go," said Jocko, sharply.

"I can't?"

"No."

"Now, you see hyar, I ain't used ter bein' talked to like that. D'ye see anything about me that looks ez though I was a hirelin' o' any man? Not any fer Joseph! I'm a free-born rockin'-hoss, I be, an' ef you don't git outer my way you'll see me kick, an' squeal, an' r'are like sin!"

"Mebbe you kin make me git outer de way," said Jocko, belligerently.

"I won't take my swear on that, fer there is a pile o' flesh onto ye. 'Cept fer some drawbacks, you'd make a good Bartholdi statoo, but all ther 'lectric lights in New York and Siam couldn't make ye look purty. Still, ef ye've got any liberty instincts about ye, I'd like ter hev ye prove it."

"You talk too much, you do."

"Ef ye don't like my way, why don't ye let me git out an' be red on me?"

"You've got ter stay hyar wid me."

"I hev? D'ye mean I'm a pris'ner?"

"Dat's jes' it."

"Tis, hey? Now, see hyar, my colored frien', I ain't wal impressed by sech words. Don't take ter 'em fer a cent. You'd better let me go, or thar'll be a epidemic. I'm a blue-blooded Tammany warrior, o' ther forty-ninth degree, an' ef I put on war-paint an' take my tommy-hatchet, I give yer ther straight tip, gore will flow. Lemme out, or I'll paint ther town red!"

Bob tried to look as fierce as he talked, but Jocko was not to be so easily moved. He kept his place and there was nothing for Bob to do but remain quiet.

The little room in which he now was, connected with one on each side, but he was wise enough

to be sure that both doors were locked. As has been said, there was no window to the room, but a faint light entered through an opening in the wall which led to the front room.

From that at the rear the boy at one time heard a faint clicking, and he suspected that Riddle was gathering up the pile of coins.

Bob took the situation quite calmly. He knew very well that he was among law-breakers; it was pretty sure they were counterfeiters, and he did not know what else; and as it was absurd to suppose words of his would move them, he made no serious attempt.

He was, however, thoroughly awake. Before the flashy young man had accosted him at Trinity Church, he had been longing for a chance to do detective work. The chance had presented itself much sooner than he expected, and he was resolved to make matters lively for the gang.

In thus deciding he did not forget that he was still in the clutches of his enemies, nor was he at all certain they would willingly let him get out.

He had by chance stumbled on an important secret. Might not these men try to keep him from telling it by severe measures?

CHAPTER III.

BOB GETS LIGHT.

HALF an hour passed. Bob took things coolly. He lounged in an easy-chair and freed his mind to Jocko occasionally, but did nothing belligerent. Now and then, though, he glanced longingly at the hole in the wall, which let in light from the next room.

He knew he could quickly go through this if let alone, but the time had not come.

At the end of the time before mentioned, there was a distinct rap at the door.

Jocko opened it, passed out, then followed a click which told that the boy was locked in. He sprung to his feet at once. He was now alone, and free to act as he thought best.

He moved the table to a place under the hole in the wall, mounted it and took a look at the next room. As he had expected, it was Miss Reddington's, but that young woman was not visible.

Bob saw something else which was of interest—the whole room was in confusion.

"Cricky!" he exclaimed, "I'll bet a pint of peanuts they've sloped. 'Fears like ther young woman is inter ther gang, an' they've taken ther scare an' h'isted anchor!"

He listened, but not a sound could he hear from the interior of the house. The rumble of wagons arose from the street, and that was all.

For a few seconds he hesitated, and then, with a quick contortion of his agile body, he wormed through the window and dropped in Miss Reddington's room.

Still, no one opposed him, and he went to the front of the room. The street lay just below. He raised the window and looked down carefully, noting the chances of a safe descent.

"Ef I can't do better I kin go by ther air-line, but I rather admire ther ole-fashioned huff-style. I reckon them hoss-flies has gone, an' I'll light out an' form ther p'lice, and try ter make things warm an' int'restin' fur them. But hol' on a jiffy!"

He had suddenly remembered the scrap of paper conveyed to him by Nelva, and he drew it quickly from his pocket. Upon it were a few lines in pencil, which he had no trouble in reading:

"Escape at once if possible. These men are terribly wicked, and I don't know but they will kill you. If you can get away, inform the police and tell them I want to be rescued. I am awfully afraid of these men, and they have got my father shut up as a slave. Oh! in mercy's name, help us, and I will bless you always."

NELVA."

"Gosh ter all fish-hooks!" muttered Bob, "that air needs investigatin'. I member that coppers ain't over-favor'ble ter me, an' I'll waltz right down an' see Mayor Grace. Don't reckon he'll 'low nobody ter be kept in bondage in his moonicipal arena, while ez fer Nelva, she's purty enough ter touch any man's heart, 'ceptin' mine. I'm pledged ter another, an' I can't be perfidious."

By this time he had the note put away, and he tried the door. It was not locked. He opened it and looked out into the hall. No one was visible.

His opinion that the gang had hastily deserted the house was confirmed, but he paid enough attention to prudence to move carefully as he hastily went down-stairs.

No one opposed his departure, and he was soon on the street.

As he left the house he saw a keen-eyed man

who seemed to be passing by chance, and noticed that he looked at him sharply, but thought nothing of it until he had gone several yards when a heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

Looking around, he saw the keen-eyed man. "That'll do," said the latter.

"W'at'll do?"

"You can't go any further."

"Can't I? Why not? D'ye think my patent leathers has gi'n out, or w'at's ther figger?"

Bob spoke mildly, for he had an idea which was soon verified.

"The 'figger' is that you're my prisoner."

"I be? W'at fur?"

"Oh! you needn't be so confounded innocent, for it won't go down. I know your game, and I know you. You're a pal of Jack Huntsman."

"Who's he?"

"So you don't know him!" sarcastically commented the stranger.

"Not ez I am aweer on."

"Didn't you take a package from him beside of Trinity, two hours ago?"

"Oh! that was Jack Huntsman, was it? I did not know his handle afore. But is that w'y ye say ye 'rest me?"

"Yes."

"Low me ter ask ef thar's any law ag'in' my conveyin' parcels, mister?"

"There is a law against smuggling diamonds, and you'll find that when you carry diamonds about in meek-looking bananas, after the gems have been stolen, you make yourself liable."

Bob looked at his companion in real amazement.

"W'at be ye givin' me?" he demanded. "Diamond's in bananas! Come, boss, my throat is a reg'lar Suez canawl, but I can't swaller that."

"We will not make any more useless words about it, but to let you see that I am not working in the dark, I'll tell you what I know. Jack Huntsman is a city confidence man and sharper-in-general, and it was he who got up the scheme of smuggling the diamonds in bananas. A confederate brought them over, but gave the package to Huntsman near Castle Garden."

"I was spotting them, with another man, though we did not know all then, or suspect that the package had the sparklers in it; and we followed Jack up Broadway. At Trinity he gave the whole business to you, and then you took a coach and came up here. Now, you see we're dead onto you, and if you know when you're well off, you'll just give Jack away, look out for Number One, and lead the way to where the sparklers are."

Bob had listened attentively to all this, and as he no longer doubted the man's good faith, he arrived at an understanding of the principal facts of the case.

"That's all right ez fur ez it goes, an' it goes a good ways; but you ain't got a true bill. I ain't no pal o' ther desperadoes, but a wictim. That's jest w'at I be—a wictim an' a innercent. I brung them thar bananas, I admit, but I never see'd that silk-tile bloke afore he give 'em ter me, an' I never knowed w'at I was bringin'."

"Nonsense!" retorted the man. "Would Huntsman trust a stranger with thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds?"

The question dazed Bob for a moment; then he rallied.

"Why not, ef ther stranger was a kid, an' didn't know a boodle was inter them blamed bananas?"

"Oh! come now—don't be so fresh," said the man, severely. "I'm a detective, and I've got this biz down fine. If you squeal on Jack, it will be a good deal better for you."

It was in vain that Bob explained his part in the affair. The detective, whose name was Chippley, scoffed at all he said, especially the part which referred to Nelva, and persisted in believing our young friend an ally of Jack Huntsman who, it seemed, was an adept at all sorts of ways that were dark.

This was aggravating, but not alarming. Bob had good friends, if he was a street-boy, who would see him safely out of his trouble; but Chippley would not take any measures to stop Rosa Reddington and the rest of the gang, but persisted in believing them still in the house.

He had a partner near at hand, and they, keeping Bob fast, duly raided the house.

As the boy had suspected, they found nothing of importance.

Old Riddle and his gang had disappeared, and with them had apparently gone the yellow coins and all other suspicious things.

Chippley was angry, and inclined to blame Bob for everything, it seemed, while Bob was just as angry and a good deal more inclined to blame the detective, though he said nothing indiscreet.

Whatever chances had once existed of rescuing Nelva seemed growing rapidly less.

Chippley's next step would have been to lock the boy up, but Bob insisted so strongly that he should be taken to the office of another detective whose name was Wrixley, that his captor yielded, and once there Bob was given such a good character that Chippley changed his tune entirely and let him go.

Now that it was too late, he regretted not having moved as Bob at first advised, and after some delay did start off to run the "crooks" down.

When they were gone the boy turned to Wrixley:

"Be you busy?"

"I am; head over heels in work. Why?"

"I wish you could take this hyer case," Bob wistfully explained.

"I wish I could, but it is out of the question. I'm so busy I can't devote any time to it."

"Thar's a confounded pile o' rascality in it."

"I believe you. I know some of the parties well. Jack Huntsman is an old offender, and this Rosa Reddington is his accomplice. It seems those diamonds were brought over from Europe by one of the gang, and given to Jack near Castle Garden, but he, finding himself watched, handed them over to you. He took a big risk, but bold ventures often win the game."

"One did it this time."

"Exactly, for Jack would have lost his diamonds had he done any way except the one he did. But to continue: Then there is the gang at the Houston street house who had the yellow coins. Counterfeiters, they, of course."

"Beyond a oita o' evidence, I should observe."

"And Nelva?" said Wrixley, looking thoughtfully at Bob.

"Now ye come ter biz," said the latter brightening. "Diamond's an' gold coin is all hunk in their way, but w'at is they compared ter flesh an' blood, an' sech a gal as she is."

"You think highly of her."

"I don't think. I know she is a peri, an' a Heber, an' all them mythologous fairies an' goddesses—that's jest w'at she is, and don't ye furgit it. Now, yer hyer, Wrixley, ye're a square man."

"Well?" questioned the detective, smiling.

"You orter rescue her outer bondage."

"I would try ef I were not so busy, but, as it is, I really can't make a move. But Chippley is on the case—"

"Yas, like a blind cow onter a flea. He won't git no game, Chippley won't; he couldn't find a hole in ther sidewalk, less he fell inter it."

Bob spoke with accents of deep regret, for he was very anxious to rescue Nelva. Her touching note was before him to remind him of her lovely mournful face, and evident sorrow, and nothing would have pleased him more than to see Wrixley take hold of the case.

When he saw that it was impossible he threw back his shoulders, thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his ragged vest and nodded emphatically.

"Wal, ef fishes can't fly they kin swim, an' I'm goin' ter take up this hyar case. It won't be my fu'st, fur you remember that when Adam Woodman, ther Connecticut nabob wi' hay-seed inter his hair, got inter quod, I rescued him. Consequently, I may consider myself a vetran detective, an' ez ther peanut trade ain't overflourishin', I'll let Stumpy attend ter that branch o' ther civil service while I go an' reform them surptine snakes thet hez got Nelva."

"How'll you do it?" Wrixley doubtfully asked.

"I can't jest tell now, but you kin bet yer suspenders thar'll be a whistle when I let off steam. Some filosof-fer hez said thar's no sech word as 'fail,' an' I'm goin' ter win this case or t'ar New York all up by ther roots, b'gravy!"

CHAPTER IV.

A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

THREE days passed, and there was no news from Jack Huntsman or the supposed counterfeiters. The former had been released soon after his arrest, for there was no evidence that he had done any smuggling, though Chippley felt very sure that he had; and that officer's most indefatigable efforts had failed to develop anything new.

He felt sure that diamonds had been smuggled in bananas, but the bananas, Jack Huntsman and Rosa Reddington were alike missing.

He was not the only one who was trying to find the plotters and sharpers; Bob o' the Bowery was zealously working with the same end in view.

Bob's "trade," as already indicated, was that of a peanut merchant. He had a stand on the Bowery, which he ran in combination with an-

other boy nicknamed "Stumpy," but the latter usually attended to the stand while Bob went abroad in search of strange occurrences, or acted as purchaser for the firm.

Since his last adventure, Bob had utterly neglected business. Nearly all his time was devoted to thoughts of Nelva, and plans for rescuing her, and he haunted Broadway persistently.

He did this because he thought it was the best place to find Jack Huntsman, and if he once got his eyes on that person he intended to follow him.

But one day followed another until, as before stated, three passed and there was no sign of Jack, nor of his confederates.

Bob had grown uneasy. He had patience enough to keep the watch for a month, but, in the meanwhile, what was happening to Nelva, and that father whom he represented as being "shut up as a slave" by her own enemies.

Delay might be dangerous, and Bob fretted more and more as time passed.

Hour after hour he haunted Broadway, watching for flashy Jack Huntsman or Miss Reddington, but it was not until the fourth day that he saw anything to arouse him from monotonous waiting.

On that afternoon he was sauntering along near Great Jones street when two young men passed him, moving up Broadway at a brisk pace.

They were fashionably dressed, wore tall hats, and carried the prevailing style of canes, which seemed to Bob more fitted for fire-pokers than anything else, and, on the whole, made quite a show in a certain way.

Now neither of these men had a familiar face, yet Bob came to a halt and gazed after them very thoughtfully, his attention being fixed sharply on one in particular.

"Is it, or ain't it?" he muttered. "Ez Macbeth Hamlet said ter his wife. 'Is this a dagger I see, or is it Jack Huntsman?'"

Bob removed his old cap and scratched his head with unconscious vigor.

"It don't look like ther bloke, fer this feller is black enough ter be a Hottentot dude, but thar is a familiar unfamiliarity in ther way he slings his huffs. Is it, or— Go 'way! it can't be. This hyer chap is a furriner, fer sure, an' Jack is one o' Uncle Sam's chickens, though I s'pect somebody slipped a buzzard's egg inter ther nest. Hol' on a bit, Robert, my frien', fer w'at is more likely than that Mister Jack, knowin' ther storm-signal is out, hez got inter a disguise ter delude Chippley's wigilance? B'gosh, I'll amble 'long arter them bloods!"

The decision was no sooner made than Bob started. His quarry had not observed him, and the pursuit was easy, so he followed them up Broadway nearly to Union Square.

His suspicion was gaining ground, for though the watched man seemed several shades darker than Jack Huntsman, the boy believed he could see many of that man's old movements.

Near Twelfth street they stopped to look in a window, and Bob pulled his cap lower over his face and boldly advanced to their side.

His idea was to overhear the dark man talking, but just as he arrived the second man was slapped on the shoulder by a third young blood, who exclaimed:

"Hallo, Murdough! If you want to star-gaze look higher."

The man addressed started, looked alarmed, Bob thought, and then laughed.

"Oh! is it you, Tripton? Glad to see you. How is everything? Let me introduce you to my friend, Count Ivan Royalschoff, late of Russia. Count, my friend, Mr. Stuyvesant Tripton."

These ponderous names almost paralyzed Bob, but he gave special attention to that of the Russian, and fixed it firmly in his mind, even while waiting to hear the noble count speak.

Royalschoff spoke, and his English was very broken and imperfect, but Bob, who had not lived near the Bowery all these years without meeting people of all nations, decided that it was even worse than an attempt of a Russian.

"He ain't no disciple o' ther czar, he ain't," thought the boy. "His lingo is more Frenchy, but it ain't none on 'em. I'm onter yer voice, my dark-complexioned frien', an' I'll eat up my peanut-stand, nails an' all, ef you hain't Mister J. Huntsman, E-squire!"

Very careful was the young detective not to betray the fact that he was acting the spy; he was now looking in the window and his back was toward the men; but he heard all and continued to analyze the voice of the reputed count.

The conversation which he heard was of no-

consequence in itself, except that part in which Murdough announced that the Russian was his guest for the time being, and then he said in an aside to Tripton that the count was a very rich and noble man in his own country.

"Gammon!" thought Bob. "Sing Sing is full o' jest sech nobles, an' they're no 'count neither."

Tripton finally went his way, and Murdough and Royalschoff kept on up-town.

We need scarcely say that Bob followed.

He was now anxious to know where Murdough lived. When he had learned that, he would deliberate on the future. He naturally supposed that Jack had made a fool and victim of Murdough, and led the latter to take him in as so many weak-minded aristocrats take in titled foreigners, simply because of their titles; but if such was the case Bob intended to show the young blood that he was the one who had been "taken in."

Still, the young detective noticed that Murdough had a dissipated look, and he was not so sure about the state of affairs.

He followed the men past Union Square, and to one of the streets between that point and Madison Square, and saw them enter a very imposing house.

Standing at a safe distance, he reconnoitered the house and tried to decide what he ought to do next.

He had very clearly settled the point that Count Ivan Royalschoff was Jack Huntsman, and had he been as reckless as some people, his first step would have been to call at the house and denounce him.

Luckily, Bob was too wise for this. He knew it was not probable any one would believe him, and such a rash move would alarm Jack.

No; his proper way was to "lay low" and continue to spy upon the sharper.

While standing thus, Bob saw a negro boy emerge from the basement door and advance toward him, and his active mind at once formed a scheme for getting more points in the game.

He had an orange in his pocket, and by the time the colored boy arrived he had it ready for a bait.

"Hallo!" he said. "How'd ye like ter wobble yer jaws 'round that thar golden sphere?"

The negro boy grinned.

"Looks mighty good," he said, wishfully.

"Jess try it an' see ef it filfills yer expectations. I've jes' b'en a-eatin' oranges all day, an' I feel like a alderman arter a session. Do it pan out wal, my frien'?"

"Bully," said the other lad, using his teeth with zeal.

"I'm rejoiced ter hear it, ez I hev an ambition ter be a benefactom o' ther human race. I'm pleased ter see ye look fat an' healthy. Got a good place?"

"Pooty fa'r."

"Many in ther fambly?"

"Free."

"Three, hey? Name is Murdough, I b'lieve?"

"Yas."

The colored boy was too busy with the orange to waste many words.

"W'ot's ther boss's name?"

"Z'lander."

"W'ot?"

The name was repeated.

"Oh! I unnerstan'. You talk wuss than a chicken wi' ther croup w'en yer a-chawin' that orange, b'gosh. Alexander, yer say? Alexander Murdough, I s'pose. Wal, he's one. Who's t'others?"

"His two chillun, Albert an' Dora."

"Um! Did I see Albert jes' go in?"

"Yas; him an' de count."

"Who's the count?"

"He's a Rushing, and his name is Even Ras-selcoff," the negro clearly explained.

"Ivan Royalschoff, hey? Wal, w'at's he doin' inter ther elder Murdough's palatial edifice?"

"Oh! he's dar 'cause he's a big man—I 'speck he's bigger dan der President, I do—leastways, I know de Murdoughs is mighty good ter him, an' I 'speck he'll marry Miss Dora."

"That a fack?"

"Yas."

"Humph! What sort o' a mistress is she, anyhow?"

"She's de bestest girl in dis city, she is. Say, ye wouldn't go back on me arter I've eat yer orange?"

"Nary a time."

"Den I'll say she's an angel, is Miss Dora; but ez fer Marse Murdough an' dat young Albert I don't like dem fur a cent."

"That's right an' proper. Is Alexander really rich?"

"He's rollin' in money."

"An' he seems ter want his darter ter marry that air black-hided Russian, does he?"

"Yas, but young Albert seems de most anxious. But I can't stop no longer, 'ca'se I'm on a errand. Thank ye fer de orange, an' good-day."

The negro left, leaving Bob to meditate anew.

"Thar's something crooked hyar, or I'm a blind goslin' with a church debt in my crap. I reckon Alexander Murdough is taken by that air Russian, fer ef he's got lots o' cash he wouldn't let no sech humbug spark his darter—not any, fer Joseph. Wal, Mister Jack Huntsman, you're a good 'un, ain't ye? W'at'll ye hev yer fingers inter next? Ye ought ter be in Sing Sing, b'gosh, an' I'm jest ther p'isen-fanged wasp ter put ye thar. I'm Bowery Bob, detective, an' I'm right onto ye like Government glue I be!"

At this point his thoughts were interrupted. A hand was laid lightly on his arm, and he turned and saw a young man of twenty-five—a rather good-looking fellow, but one who had a flashy air which recalled Huntsman at once to the boy's mind.

"'Nother o' ther brood, b'gosh!" was his unspoken verdict.

"See here, young fellow, are you busy?" asked the stranger.

"Wal, no," replied Bob deliberately; "trade ain't drivin'."

"Do you want to earn a quarter?"

"My frien', you can bet yer high-heeled shoes I do," Bob freely acknowledged.

"You can have the money by delivering this note at the fourth house yonder—Murdough is the name on the door. If you can read you will see it is addressed to Count Ivan Royalschoff. I want you to inquire for him, and deliver the note to nobody else. See?"

Bob thought he saw a good deal more than the man intended he should, and he nodded promptly, showing no particular interest.

"I should ree-mark that I do see. 'Tis ez cl'ar ez Croton. Give us ther note an' ther quarter, an' I'll put 'em whar they'll do ther most good, ez ther mouse said when he swallowed ther cat."

"Very good; don't fail to do ther job right. I'm in haste and must leave, but do you give the note to Royalschoff."

CHAPTER V.

BOB GETS INTO HOT QUARTERS.

THE flashy young man repeated his directions earnestly, and then hurried away, jumped on a Fourth avenue up-town car and was soon whisked out of Bob's sight.

The boy shut one eye and looked after him speculatively.

"Farewell, my royal nibs, an' ef ferever, why, so-long. I've got yer quarter, an' I've got yer note, an' I 'member I promised ter put them whar they'd do ther most good. That ain't in ther hands o' ther Russian no-'count count, not fer Joseph! I ain't in ther habit o' burglarizin' letters, fer I allow 'tain't square, but when dealin' wi' sech lop-eared coyotes ez you an' Ivan, thar hez ter be a special bill put through ther House o' Lords. I'm goin' ter see w'at is contained in this dockymint."

So the young detective turned the corner and, stepping into a deep doorway broke the envelope open.

Then he read the following letter:

"DEAR COUNT:—Come to No. — Seventeenth street at eight to-night, without fail. The girl is contumacious, and may make trouble. We want your advice. Shall be able to ship the yellow boys in two days. Come without fail!"

"ETHAN EAMES."

Bob's face brightened.

The whole tenor of the letter seemed vitally important. In his opinion the girl referred to was Nelva, while what could the reference to "yellow boys" mean unless it was the counterfeit money?

And the signature! Bob had not forgotten that when he carried the bananas for Huntsman, his orders had been to first ask for Ethan Eames, and, in case he was not in the Houston street house, for Miss Reddington.

"Wal, now, ef this ain't biz, w'at is it? Reckon that chap didn't s'pect who he was a-givin' this due-billy to. Must be I ain't got a perfeshnal look. Deliver this 'ere dockymint ter Count No-'count? Oh! yes, I will—not! I'm onto a ripple in ther game, an' I won't let no grass grow under my cowhides afore I investigate. I'm goin' straight ter No. — Seventeenth street an' take a look at that air mansion, an' ef Nelva is shet up inter it, I'll hev her out or bu'st my boot-heels off, b'gosh!"

The young detective lost no time in making the first move in this direction, but at once set off for Seventeenth street.

When he arrived at the stated number, he found the house to be a large one which had once been quite grand, but time had laid a heavy hand upon it, and it now looked grim and lonesome.

It stood somewhat back from the street, and was surrounded by a small yard, and Bob found that he could not learn much about it from that point.

He looked wishfully at the yard.

He could easily scale the fence, but would it be prudent?

"I'll try it, ef they set a Siberian blood-sucker onto me. I feel a feelin' that I kin learn enough ter make it a joodicious investment, so hyar goes!"

With one last look to make sure no watcher was in sight, he leaped over the fence and then took refuge in the shrubbery with which the yard was filled. Of course it was leafless, but it served as protection enough.

Using it carefully, Bob gained the rear of the house. Then he saw for the first time that a piazza ran along one end and the rear, which was really the best part of the house, and a daring scheme entered his mind.

Why couldn't he enter the house?

The back-door was open, and so was one window which opened on the piazza, while no one was visible.

Now, no one was better aware than Bob o' the Bowery that what he contemplated was a dangerous move in a double sense. To enter any house as he thought of doing was to run the risk of being arrested as a burglar; while to enter one where Riddle, Jocko and Miss Reddington were was to risk his life; but he thought only of Nelva.

She must be rescued.

If she was in the house, danger should not keep him back.

Thinking thus, he quickly crossed the yard, ascended the stairs and stood on that part of the piazza which was on a level with the second story windows.

All remained quiet.

Here the adventurer paused, and well he might. He knew he was daring a good deal and intended to be cautious, but he did not know all. If he had, he would have made a hurried retreat.

From a third-story window his every movement was being closely observed, and the man who peered out so secretly through the blinds, and smiled triumphantly as he saw Bob venture along a step at a time, was none other than he who had given the boy the letter to Count Royalschoff.

Had Bob seen him it would not have failed to flash upon him that that letter was the first step in an attempt to decoy him into the old house for—what dark purpose was there in view?

But Bob saw him not, and little dreamed that he was doing just what his deadly enemies wished him to do.

Finding everything so quiet, the boy crept through the window and stood fairly within the lair of the sharpeners.

He was in an ordinary bedroom, but he lost little time in opening the door, and seeing what was beyond. It proved to be a small room with only one other mode of egress, and as Bob reached this he was brought to a halt by the sound of voices beyond.

Cautiously opening the door a trifle, he looked through. What he saw settled one question in his mind. The room was a sort of kitchen, and two persons were working there.

They were Jocko, the big negro, and Hannah, the woman who had admitted him at Houston street.

"I'm arter them, ez sure ez clam-bait!" Bob thought. "Hyar is two o' ther main-braces o' ther crook caravan, an' ther rest o' ther derrick must be 'round som'ers. Ther chief interrogatory is, how's ever, whar's Nelva?"

This point he was anxious to settle, and he would have moved at once had there been any way except to return to the piazza, but at this moment old Hannah began to speak and Bob was held motionless by her words.

"I tell you, Jocko, we want to keep a close watch on that girl, Nelva."

"Wal, ain't dat w'at's bein' done?" Jocko asked.

"I suppose they think so."

"I don't see no great harm in a gal like dat," the giant sulkily added. "I could scrush her wid one hand."

"Don't you try it."

"Wal, who said I's goin' ter?"

"You don't know all about that girl, Jocko."
 "Do you?"
 "Well, no," thoughtfully replied Hannah, "but I know a good deal. For one thing, I know she is heiress to a mighty pile of money."

"Go 'way."
 "It's a fact, Jocko. You know old Alexander Murdough, I suppose?"

"Don't I, though!"
 "Well, Nelva's his daughter!"
 Jocko stared at her with dilated eyes.

"Go 'way!" he repeated.
 "She's his real heiress, and Albert and Dora are mere nobodies. Who they are I don't know, and I admit there is a mystery about the case which I can't get at. One thing I do know, Nelva is old Murdough's daughter."

"Then," said astonished Jocko, "whose daughter is de man we hab shut up—I mean, whose father am he? Dat is ter say, he claims ter be de gal's father, an' she claims him, too. How's dat?"

"Now, you have me, Jocko. As I said before, there is a mystery about the whole affair. It is mightily mixed up, but I give you the straight tip that if we want any good out of Ethan Eames, we don't want to let Nelva escape."

We need scarcely say that all this was very interesting to Bob, though quite as surprising and perplexing as it was to Jocko, not the least astonishing point being that Nelva was Murdough's heiress, when Albert and Dora seemed to stand in the way of succession.

Careful consideration of this point was prevented, however, for the time being.

Bob heard a slight sound behind him.
 He wheeled, nimble as a cat, but as he turned his arms were grasped by strong hands and he found himself a prisoner, and looking into the face of the man who had given him the note.

Close behind that person was a second man.
 Bob's captor laughed aloud.

"Aha! so we've got you, my vagabond spy?"
 For once Bob had no reply ready.

"You run your head into the trap just as prettily as a lamb, didn't you? Ha! ha!—that note for Royalschoff was all a decoy to bring you here. I knew you'd read it and stick your nose in where it didn't belong, and I arranged the trap. You're in it, too. Jocko, do you remember this kid?"

"Bet yer life I do, dat!" the negro returned.
 "Wal, I reckon ye don't know no harm on me," retorted Bob, who could not long be kept down. "I'm a blue-blood o' ther fu'st water right from Murray Hill. I hev got p'litical influence 'nough ter send me ter Congress ef I wanted; an' I'm a stockholder in ther Bartholdi Statoo ter ther extent o' twenty-five cents, an' don't need no better posish."

"You'll need a statue of your own pretty soon," said his captor.

"Hello! be you thar, Ethan Eames?"
 "That's not my name; I merely signed it because I knew it would help decoy you here. No, Ethan is one of our gang, but not here at present. As for me, I am named Chug Bates. You see I am frank, but I'm not afraid to be. You'll never give us away."

"Won't I?"
 "No, you won't."

"Jes' ez you say, yer nibs."
 "Do you know why? I'll tell you. Before morning you will be asleep at the bottom of the East river."

"Go 'way! Ye must think I hev a queer taste. My skin is so mighty porous, I'd git wet a-sleepin' thar. 'Sides, I knew one chap what slept thar a week fur a wager, an' when his time was up he died. He won ther boodle, but water on ther brain did him up."

"That'll do. It seems your tongue is one of the kind that goes like perpetual motion, but I don't care to hear it. At any rate, it'll stop forever to-night."

Jocko took up a huge knife and advanced.
 "Let me at de little reptyle!" he said, in a terrible voice.

"Let him alone," replied Bates.
 Jocko, however, was on the war-path, and he flourished around Bob and made passes at him with the knife until Bates was obliged to order him back in a way not to be disregarded.

Hannah then claimed attention and, looking a good deal frightened, wanted to know how Bob happened to be there, for it seemed neither she nor Jocko had been taken into Bates's confidence.

The latter stated that he had seen enough to convince him that the boy was spying upon them—here he winked at Hannah to suggest that further particulars be reserved for a future time—and had hastily arranged a scheme for getting the spy into captivity.

"And here he is," he added.
 "You think you've did a mighty smart thing, Mister Plug Bates, don't ye?" scornfully asked Bob. "Wal, I want'er impress one cardigan truth on yer mind, an' that is that ye can't hold water in a muskeeter net. No more kin ye hold me. I'm inter hock now, ez I admit, but I'll git out ef I bu'st ev'ry porous plaster on my body, an' when I do git out I'll go up ter Albany an' git ther Governor ter order out a hull regiment o' m'lishy ter my aid, an' I'll jest make ther walls o' yer durned ole castle drop in flakes an' scabs, b'gosh!"

"You're not out yet, my young gamecock, and don't you think you will be. I tell you that you'll sleep in East river to-night. Desperate cases require desperate remedies, and since you've poked your nose into our affairs, you've got to die! Do you hear that, you young villain? I've got a revolver in my pocket, and the lead that's in it is for you!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY DETECTIVE'S GREAT PERIL.

"WAL, hyar I be, shet up like a lamb 'bout ter be slaughtered. I'm powerful afraid I'll be cut off in ther flower o' my youth, an' ther world be deprived o' my talent fur onraveling detective skeins. S'pose I orter be reconciled, but it seems sorter hard ter be switched off on a side-track jest ez I war onter ther track o' sech big game."

The speaker was Bowery Bob. He had been confined in a strong room with the comforting announcement that in a few hours he would be butchered, after which his lifeless body would be sunk in East river.

He knew that his enemies were in earnest, but he had given no sign of weakness. His last words to Mr. Chug Bates were brave and buoyant, and when alone he had maintained his coolness.

His present quarters were much like the room at Houston street where Jocko had kept him for a time; it was a "dark room," without any window, and situated between two others; and in this case there was no hole for him to crawl through. The gas was burning, however.

"Seems sorter tough ter douse a feller's glim wi'out givin' him a chance fer ter make his will, b'gosh! Now, thar is ther peanut stand on ther Bowery, an' Stumpy don't know who my heirs be—fer that matter, I don't neither, but I know a gal named Nan, which same sorter hes a mortgage on my heart, an' I'd like her ter hev w'at lucre I've got saved up. B'gosh! she shall hev it, an' I'm goin' ter git out an' deliver ther cash ter her pussonally afore I slide over ther crick."

Bob looked speculatively at his bound wrists. He was strong and agile, and past experience led him to believe he could get out of this difficulty, but how was he to leave the room?

"Both doors locked, an' no winder what-somdever. Wal, w'at o' that? W'at's ter hinder me a-diggin' through ther wall? S'pect thar's nothin' but plaster an' brittle boards thar, an' I've got a pocket-knife strong enough ter slash ther mortar all ter smash. I'll try it!"

He began operations, but it was no small job to get clear of his bonds. He twisted and squirmed into all possible shapes, and after a long battle they weakened.

Continuing, he finally had the satisfaction of standing clear, but his mind began to be troubled. So much time had elapsed he knew it must now be nearly dark—perhaps quite as late as that—and Chug Bates might take it into his head to play the assassin game at any time.

"Thar ain't no time ter lose," thought Bob. "I must be up an' doin', or I'll git most mightily done up."

He produced his pocket-knife.
 It was an unusually large knife of the kind, but only a brave and sanguine boy would have expected to gain liberty with it.

Bob lost no time, but attacked the plastering on the east wall, and he soon found that in this respect he would have no trouble. Time had loosened it, and it gave way quite readily.

For some time he had heard nothing from his enemies, but he worked in constant expectation of their reappearance. Nobody could realize the danger more clearly than he. He had made himself dangerous to desperate criminals, and they intended to take his life.

How would his efforts to escape result?
 Would he be detected in the midst of all and killed off-hand like a mere ox?

He worked rapidly, expecting every moment to hear his returning foes, but keeping as cool-headed as ever.

The plastering was soon removed, and then his real work began. Beyond him was a line of laths, something not so easily got away with.

Still, he did not stop. His knife, originally very keen-edged, had not been blunted to any great extent, and he began cutting away the narrow strips of board.

His success surprised and delighted him, and he went on with zeal. One after another was removed until his half of the wall was perforated to such an extent as was necessary for escape.

"Now fur ther other! Ef thar should happen ter be folkses in t'other room I'm a gone goslin', but ef thar ain't, I reckon I'll 'stonish them measly blood-suckers."

He went on. The wood which he had to cut proved to be uncommonly adapted to cutting, and he wielded his knife with skill.

One thing troubled him, however. The first lath came out quite easily, but the second loosened a good deal of plastering, which rattled down in the other room audibly.

"Gosh all fiddle strings! ef them chaps is any-whar about, that'll bring 'em down on me like a wolf on ther fold. Anybody would think ther ole house was a-tumblin' down ker-slap."

He waited a few moments, but all remained quiet and he renewed his attack. Lath by lath was removed until at last—eureka!—he had made a hole large enough for him to pass through.

Up to this he had not been able to see anything beyond, but the gaslight from his own room now showed him a red substance close at hand in the other apartment.

He reached through and found that a table, covered with a cloth, stood against the wall, exactly where he had made the opening.

As he was now ready for his real attempt to escape, he was about to move this when he heard voices and the door-knob of the other room rattled. Quick as a cat he sprang back and turned his gas nearly down, and then returned to the hole in the wall.

Just as he did so a light flashed up in the other room. The table almost hid the opening, but he could barely see over the top of it, and two men were thus brought to his view.

One was Chug Bates.
 The other was a tall man with coal-black hair and beard, but Bob had no sooner seen these last articles than he suspected they were false. Why he did he could not have told, for they looked real enough.

So far he felt sure his digging operations had not been discovered. It became a vital question, would they be discovered?

The floor was covered with plastering which had rattled down, but this was behind the table. The spread hung well down, but not far enough to hide the white pile if the men looked that way.

To Bob's uneasy mind, the plastering seemed to glow like an electric light.

The men, however, had seated themselves and were so far sublimely unconscious.

"Well, about this boy," said the larger man. "Who is he, anyway?"

"A mere street Arab; one of those ragged, dirty fellows whom we are apt to underrate, but who are really as sharp as needles. There is no experience develops a lad half so much as their life."

"I know all that, but tell me about this particular one."

"Well, he calls himself Bob o' the Bowery, which is all I know about him except what he's done in this case. You see, Jack Huntsman got the diamonds after Dooley brought 'em over in the bananas, and as Chippley and Crippins was on the watch, the first shadowed Jack while Crip laid for Dooley."

"Huntsman saw he was spotted, and as 'twas a chance if he wormed out, he resolved to play a desperate game. Seeing a street boy by Trinity, he gave him the package and hired him to take it to Ethan Eames or Miss Reddington. Of course it was running an awful risk, for if the boy stole the bananas, Jack would also lose the sparklers; but what could he do? Chippley had his eye on him, and it was his only chance."

"Luckily, Chippley was too stupid to suspect the dodge, and the boy was allowed to go. I need scarcely say this boy was Bob o' the Bowery. I arrived on the scene just in time to get a good look at the boy, but not soon enough to relieve him of the bananas."

Jack and I foiled Chippley and got clear, but Dooley was not so lucky. The other detective gobbled him, and Dooley weakened and told the whole business. In the meanwhile Bob went to Houston street, where he stumbled onto Gnarl Riddle and his operations, and the gang had to light out. The cops had Jack at one time but had to let him go for lack of proof."

"I soon learned that the boy meant mischief, and when I saw that he had actually tumbled to

Huntsman in his disguise as Count Royalschoff, I gave him a decoy note which brought the kid here, and then I bagged him."

The elder man had listened carefully to this explanation, as had Bob, also.

"You really think the boy is dangerous?"

"I know it."

"Then he must be put out of the way."

"Of course. None of us wants to go to Sing Sing."

"I don't, for one," said the elder man, with a shiver. "If it was known who Cap Golden, the money-maker, really is, it would make a terrible uproar."

"And make it uncomfortable for you."

"Confoundedly so."

"As a result, the boy must be removed."

"Yes; show him no mercy."

"All right; I'll settle him inside of an hour."

"Will ye?" thought listening Bob. "Wal, now, this ere is mighty pleasant. Next ter be present at a chap's own funeral, hearin' hisself disposed on orally is int'restin'; I may say it is mighty interestin'."

"Well, you can attend to that," said Cap Golden. "In the meanwhile, what about The Coiner and Nelva?"

"Nothing new."

"Coiner still works?"

"Oh! yes. He often gets sort of desperate and says he would kill us if he could, but we don't give him a chance, and he just works so he need not go mad with thinking."

"Very commendable in him. But what is the effect of putting Nelva back?"

"It works well. Both she and the old man work more cheerfully."

Golden laughed.

"Wouldn't people be amazed if they knew there were slaves right here in New York, working day after day?"

"At dangerous work, too."

"Mighty dangerous."

"But profitable for us."

"Right you are, and The Coiner is a treasure to us. I don't know another man who is his equal on such jobs."

"Nor I, but do you know, Cap, I've had an uneasy feeling lately; a sort of presentiment that our game is about over, and the claim worked out?"

"Nonsense!"

"That's all very well, but ever since that Bob o' the Bowery began to amble around I've felt uneasy."

"My dear Bates, it is plain that the boy is a nightmare to you, and the sooner you silence him, the better. I feel a little uneasy about him, too, and I'll wait in the house until the job is done. Do you go and get Jocko, and finish the kid at once."

"All right. Mister Bob will be a clod in five minutes."

Bates arose and left the room, while the subject of their conversation gripped his pocket-knife and stood in doubt and irresolution.

Had there been a chance he would gladly have thought the danger exaggerated, but there was none. He had made himself obnoxious to desperate scoundrels, and they had decreed that his life must be the forfeit.

The danger was close at hand.

In a very short time the murderers would appear.

What was he to do?

Bob was a brave boy, but when he saw himself hemmed in between so many enemies he could not help feeling that the odds were greater than he ought to encounter.

What was to be done?

Just then he could think of but one thing and he sprang to the gas-jet and turned the light entirely off. He at once saw that this was a mistake. The light from the other room sent one narrow ribbon of yellow into the darkness, through the space above the table, and would, of course, betray his work at once to Chug Bates and the giant negro.

But even as Bob comprehended this he saw that it was too late to remedy the mistake; the key clicked and the door opened.

CHAPTER VII.

BOB'S STARTLING DISCOVERY.

EMERGENCIES often stir one to greater efforts, and Bob o' the Bowery, instead of being dismayed by the near approach of danger, instantly regained all his coolness.

"It's do er die," thought he, "an' I'll be chawed ef I don't do!"

And then he scrambled through the hole in the wall, at the same time pulling the table-cover up so as to shut out all light, and found

himself in the room with Cap Golden, and only screened from view by the table.

This refuge he knew amounted to nothing, for there was nothing to hide his avenue of departure from Bates, and he determined on prompt action.

Golden had drawn a letter from his pocket and was unsuspecting of what was being done, but though Bob might have darted past him, he thought it best to put him temporarily out of the way before leaving the room.

Accordingly, he made a rush, and as Golden turned his head he was struck by something which upset both himself and his chair, and sent him rolling over on the floor like a hoop.

The gas was within the boy's reach, and with one sweep he turned it off. Then he sprang toward the door.

As he had hoped it was unlocked, and he darted through into the hall.

Here all was darkness, and he knew not which way to turn. He remembered, however, that the longer part of the hall was to his left, and in this direction he made haste to go. As he did so an angry outcry was mingled with Cap Golden's curses, and he knew Bates had discovered his flight.

Then the latter's voice arose again.

"Quick, Jocko! Go to the outside door and cut off his retreat!"

The first part of the order was obeyed with unexpected promptness and the big negro swept along like a cyclone.

Bob heard him coming and thought best to make himself as small as possible, so he crouched on the floor, but the result proved that he had got in just the wrong place.

When too late, he saw that Jocko was going to collide with him.

Then one big boot struck him in the shoulder, and the negro gave a surprised grunt and turned over him like an acrobat. But this was not all. A tremendous clattering followed, and Jocko went bouncing down the stairs.

Bob did not care to follow. He wanted to get out on the piazza by which he had entered, and he quickly arose and pushed forward, looking for a window.

He did not at first see any, but a faint light finally guided him. He threw up the sash, unclosed the blinds and passed through.

By this time both Bates and Golden were in the hall and storming like pirates, but the racket made by Jocko had disturbed them and they did not move with remarkable celerity.

The boy felt that his chances were very good, and he ran nimbly down the piazza stairs. He had no desire to remain longer, and he made for the street without delay. Once on the sidewalk he drew a long breath and looked back. Lights were appearing in the house.

"Go it, Ole Hundred!" Bob cried, exultingly.

"You kin s'arch till yer knee-pans loosen, but divil a chap o' my inches will ye find. I've see'd all I wanten o' yer style o' beef-hash, an' now I'm off ter pastures new. Ef it lays within me ter make ye sick, thar'll be an awful unheave hyer purty quick!"

And away went the boy to the nearest police-station.

We have before observed that officers, and, we may add, officials of all classes, are not prejudiced in favor of boys. Let a ragged, sharp-faced, prococious boy make a complaint, and the chances are that he will at first be regarded as trying to "sell" those to whom he makes it.

It was so on the present occasion.

The well-meaning officer who heard the hurried story could not help thinking that it sounded more like a tale from the Arabian Nights than anything else, and though he finally sent several men with Bob, so much time had been consumed that they found—nothing!

Once more the gang had taken the alarm and an unceremonious flight.

Investigation showed that the house had been hired, ready-furnished, from an honest owner by Chug Bates, inside of a week.

But Cap Golden, Bates, Jocko and Hannah had all disappeared like will-o'-the-wisps.

Bowery Bob was chagrined, but he was more than ever determined to persevere in his work. As he expressed it, "it looked mighty ez though he had got arter big game, an' he was goin' ter corral 'em in Sing Sing."

He went to his own humble quarters at a late hour and slept soundly until morning, and then prepared for another step he had decided to take.

According to what Hannah had said to Jocko, there was that about the case which ought to interest the elder Murdough, and Bob wished to see him.

"Tain't a dead sure thing he'll wanten see

me though," he thought, as he walked up the Bowery to Fourth avenue. "He's a 'ristocrat, while I don't s'pose my numerous streaks o' genius show through these hyar rags. Still, ef I kin git ther ear o' his nibs, I reckon I kin pin his attention wi' one sentence. W'at shall it be? I must contrive ter make it a stunner."

By the time he reached Murdough's house he had it ready, and he boldly rung the bell.

It was lucky for him that at that moment Miss Dora Murdough was near the door, and as she did not think it any disgrace to open it, he was soon looking at a face so pretty that he promptly pulled off his old cap.

"Hope ye'll 'scuse me fer introodin'," he said, "but I hev 'portant biz wi' Mr. Alexander Murdough, ter wit, namely, an' I hev called fer ter inquire ef I kin hev ther august privilege o' a passonal interview in his presence."

The young lady smiled.

"Mr. Murdough is in his library, and I think you can see him," she replied.

"Then ef you'll hev ther kindness ter p'int out his door, I'll walk inter it an' introdooce myself."

"I'll show you there myself."

The library proved to be close at hand, and, the young detective was soon in the presence of a tall, gray-haired old man who looked crabbed enough to lead to the suspicion that he fed chiefly on nails, glass and such articles. Bob was then left alone with him.

He gazed at the intruder in mute amazement, for never before had such a ragged imp stood on his magnificent carpet.

"Beggin' yer pardon," said Bob, coolly, "I hope ez how ye ain't so driv by mental labor that ye can't give me a few minutes o' time. I b'lieve I kin make myself int'restin', ef not amosin'."

"Who in the furies are you?" Murdough demanded.

"My name is Long, but you'll obsarve that I'm rayther short in statute. Got stunted w'en I's a mere boy, an' never could spread over much s'ile sence."

"How dared you come here?" angrily asked the old man.

"How dared I?"

"That was my question."

"Wal, I wa'n't aware that it took sech a pow'ful amount o' nerve, but ef ye say I ain't wanted I kin shove my patent leathers outer ther shop. Still, I hev that tersay w'at may be important ter you."

"I thought you were a beggar," slowly observed Murdough, looking at his visitor with strange intentness.

"Do I look like that sort o' a hair-pin? No, sirree, I ain't, not any fer Joseph. I'm a 'lightened American citizen, who needed no civilization papers; an' a down-town merchant in good stannin', wal-knowned at ther Produce Exchange, City Hall an' Custom House. A beggar? Nary time, you bet; I ain't even s'licitin' alimony for charitable purposes."

All this while Murdough had continued his close regard. He now pointed to a chair.

"Sit down!" he said, but all the severity was gone from his voice and manner.

Bob calmly obeyed.

"Now, what have you to say to me?"

Bob opened his mouth for the "stunner" which he had prepared on his way to the rich man's house.

"Be you aweer," he asked, "that Albert an' Dora hain't your children?"

Steady and quiet was the question; but as a "stunner" it seemed to be a complete success. The boy was amazed at the result.

Alexander Murdough's jaw fell, his eyes dilated, and his face assumed an ashen pallor unusual to it. He sat still and speechless, staring at Bob as though he had seen a ghost.

Such strange agitation could not escape the boy's keen eyes; but he could not understand it and, though he wanted to say more he had no words ready.

The clock on the shelf seemed to tick a vast number of times before more was said. Then one word burst explosively from Murdough's lips:

"What?"

Somewhat abashed by the commotion he had created, Bob still had nerve enough to repeat his exact words.

"What do you mean by such an absurd question?" then demanded Murdough.

"Wal, dunno perzactly w'at I do mean, but ef ye're agreeable, I kin unfold ther primitive cause o' my interrog."

"Do so!" and Mr. Murdough's jaws came together with a snap.

"Wal, ye see, I heerd a benighted female cit-

izen observe ter that effect. I don't jestly ketch onter ther rifle, but she 'lowed that Albert an' Dora wa'n't yer kids, but that another kid was; an' ez I hev a weakness ter benefit my feller-bein's, I set ther machinery o' my j'int's in motion, an' huffed it hyer fer ter let ye onter ther hull game."

"Who said anything of the kind?"

"A sort o' bilious-looking female woman named Hannah—ter wit, namely."

"Hannah!"

"Yas—Hannah. Spell it either way."

The gray look was no longer on Alexander Murdough's face, but there was that about his mouth which told that he was thoroughly interested—and something more. Bob had good reason to believe his companion knew Hannah, for his expression was wolfish.

His voice was quiet enough when he spoke again.

"Tell me all about it."

This was a natural request, but Bob did not feel so communicative as he had. He did not like Murdough, and if he had been well away from the place he would not have walked in again at present. Still, he was embarked on the enterprise, and he felt obliged to tell something; so, without any details, he repeated as nearly as he could what Hannah had said to Jocko.

One thing only he kept back.

Something told him not to mention Nelva's name, and he simply referred to her as "the girl."

"Where did you hear all this?" asked Murdough, who had watched him keenly; his scrutiny was painfully close.

"It come ter pass on Sixteenth street."

"How did you happen to overhear it?"

Every minute increased Bob's dislike for the man, and something more was now in his mind. From the first he had thought there was something familiar about Mr. Murdough, and all the while he had been studying him.

An idea had now suddenly entered his mind which rather staggered him, but he was not inclined to decide hastily on the point.

Being in such a state of uncertainty, he thought himself justified in telling the story to suit himself, and he informed his questioner that he heard the talk while "near a house."

"What house?"

Murdough's voice rung out sharply again, and as he spoke he made a quick gesture which confirmed Bob's latest suspicion. It also nearly upset him, for, unless he was greatly mistaken, Mr. Alexander Murdough and Cap Golden were one and the same person!

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ARCH-VILLAIN'S PLOTS.

If Bob o' the Bowery had seen a few years more experience as a detective he would have learned by that time that nothing is too strange to be true, but he was only a boy and it rather dazed him to discover that this ponderous aristocrat was also a counterfeiter and ally of low scamps.

When the idea was once fixed in his mind it did not waver. Although "Cap Golden" had worn jet-black hair and beard, and Murdough was gray, he saw the resemblance more and more every minute.

"Reckon I've put my foot inter it cl'ar over my calfskin gaiters, an' brung my pigs ter ther wrong market," was his mental comment. "Gosh all bagpipes, how'm I ter git out on't?"

Luckily for him, his active mind suggested a way. He had, indeed, come to the wrong man to tell his story, and he was not slow to see that he was in danger.

By this time, of course, Murdough knew him to be the boy who had overturned him the previous night, and the old schemer must see how dangerous the boy was.

More than that, he would probably try to get him out of the way, so that he could tell the story to no one else.

But how would he go to work to do it?

"Wal, I opine he hez only ter call in a copper an' hand me over on a charge o' theft an' I'm up a stump wi' slivers all stuck inter my skin. He'll do it, too, ef he knows I hev recognized him. B'gosh! I've got ter play sharp, or thar will be a rattlin' o' dry boneses an' B. Bob, E-squire, will git his hip-j'int flung inter convulsions. I've got ter brace up an' lie like a grave-stone."

These thoughts flashed through the young detective's mind, and the way he "braced up" was wonderful. He stretched both legs out in front of him, thrust his hands into his pockets, and with the coolest air imaginable, told a story to suit himself.

It sounded plausible, though, of course, Murdough knew it was not true.

Bob, however, had a distinct object in view. His hearer could mentally find several reasons why he should speak falsely on small points, and if he could get out of the house in safety it was all he asked.

As the boy went on Mr. Murdough began to caress his chin and look thoughtful, and at the end the man's voice arose as gently as the song of a bee.

"This is a very strange story, my boy—very strange. What did you think of it?"

"Wal," seriously replied Bob, "it sorter struck me thet you orter know yer own child'un ez wal as that female woman did. I reasoned like unto this hyer: Ef yer s'posed darter, Dora, ter wit, namely, was o' ther same age ez t'other gal, they might 'a' b'en changed in their cradles, er when sojournin' at Coney Island or elsewhar, but ez thar seems ter be a hiotus o' somethin' like ten year, more or less, in their ages, 'twould 'a' b'en difficult ter deceive yer pariental eye by sech a swap."

"Well reasoned," replied Murdough.

"Tharfore, ther statement o' ther female woman seemed ter me ter be summut fishy, ez 'twar, by which I mean thet it sounded like a mighty big lie. Still, ther idee got ter carousin' in my mind that I orter tell ye w'at she hed said, an' hyar I be, tharfore an' hence."

"You have done right, very right," said the rich man, "and though I regard all the woman said as absurd, I mean to take counsel from your own course and look her up."

"'Twould be a good idee. She ain't a beauty in ther usual sense o' ther word, fer ther roses an' pinks is all gone from her face an' her complexion is like a sunflower arter it's b'en wilted by bein' hung under a dude's eye-glasses, but ther old lady's tongue is still agyle—'tis mighty agyle."

"Well, I wish to see her this evening. Can you call at eight o'clock and go with me in my carriage to identify her?"

As Murdough spoke he drew a handful of bank-notes from his pocket and began to run them over suggestively.

Bob allowed his eyes to sparkle.

"Oh! sart'in. My pardner, Stumpy, will need me ter close up ther office 'bout seving o'clock, but I kin git erround by eight."

"Very well; I shall look for you. I want to settle this matter. Here is a five-dollar note for your trouble, and I'll give you more this evening. If we don't find the woman you shall have a ten, while if we do find her I'll make it a twenty."

"That's square—yes, it's more'n that; it's prodigal; an' you kin bet yer extra stamps I'm inter ther game with blood in my eye an' a business step. If porous plasters ain't lost their drawin' faculties, we'll 'git thar.'"

Mr. Murdough seemed satisfied with this arrangement, and then he offered no objection to Bob's departure.

The latter went, and lost himself in the distance as soon as possible, not being quite sure that Murdough would not set a policeman on his track.

When satisfied that he was not pursued, he paused and looked back thoughtfully.

"Wal, I'll be pulverized fur hash ef that wa'n't a close call. Who'd ever hev thunk his nibs, old Murray Hill Murdough, was a counterfeiter war chief? B'gosh, 'tain't safe ter put yer trust in princes these times—not any, fer Joseph! Why, I'd ez soon hev thought o' findin' Settin' Bull loafin' 'round thar."

His surprise was well-founded, but it did not prevent him from meditating further.

"Pears like w'at ole Hannak said was a untruthful fable. A. Murdough, E-squire, ain't no blind goddess o' spring po'try, an' he's up ter fire-crackers. Ef Nelva is his darter, he knows it—but, of course, she ain't; not fer Joseph. She's ther chick o' ther man called The Coiner, an' she an' her parient is slaves o' ther gang ter which Plug Bates, Cap Golden, Jack Huntsman-Cuffmyeyebrowoff, an' company, is members. Kerosene 'ilean' ketchup! this is a measly sort o' a banquet, an' it rayther chills my detective blood w'en I see w'at big game I'm arter."

Bob rubbed his nose ruefully, and then suddenly threw back his head and shoulders.

"It don't stan' a civilized American citizen ter be skeered by any devastatin' epidemic knowed ter mah, an', b'gosh, I won't take water—not fer Joseph! I'll keep on an' un'arth that nest o' serpentine vipers, an' all their hissins' shan't skeer me. Hi! hi! Mr. A. Murdough, E-squire; won't you be so tickled yer moccasins will drop off w'en yer see me this eve? You would jest revel in gittin' me inter yer measly

old carriage so ye could shet me up in a prison, some'r's, wouldn't ye? But you can't; no, sirree, hoss-fly! I sha'n't keep that 'gagement, but ye needn't be lonesome ef my beaming face don't rise above ther horizon. I'm arter ye, Murder, ole boy, an' when I git thar ye'll think a cyclone hez come from Timbuctoo by express!"

Half an hour after Bob's departure, Dora Murdough was summoned to her father's room.

Whatever was in the old man's mind, his face showed no trace of trouble. Perhaps the time since Bob's going had not been one of pleasant thoughts, but he had a strong will, and if he really felt alarmed by what had lately occurred, he had conquered his annoyance so far as outward signs went, and he greeted her with a blandness which rather surprised her.

Usually he was not a very pleasant man; he had never wasted any affection on either Dora or Albert, and, on the whole, there was no strong liking between him and his present companion.

As a result, his unusual suavity surprised her.

"Sit down, my dear," he said; "I have something of importance to say to you. Within an hour I expect a caller, whom you do not now know, but whom I desire you to receive pleasantly."

"Do I ever receive your guests otherwise?" asked Dora, freshly surprised.

"Oh, no; I do not mean to convey that idea. But this is something more than an ordinary guest."

"Who is he?"

Mr. Murdough smiled faintly.

"You have used the wrong pronoun; the word 'he' requires an 's' before it. The expected guest is a lady."

"Oh!"

The single word expressed a good deal, for the way in which the announcement had been approached, suggested an idea to the young lady.

"Not to have you waste your time in conjectures," added Murdough, "let me say that she is a member of a noble old Creole family of New Orleans, and is, at present, named Miss Lethroe. Within a week I hope to see her called Mrs. Alexander Murdough."

The speaker leaned back in his chair and tried to assume a careless air, but his gaze was fixed on Dora's face with almost hawk-like keenness.

Although this was merely confirmation of her suspicion, the young lady felt somewhat startled. She could not remember her own mother, and consequently felt less pained at the thought of another woman in her place; but though she recognized her father's right to proceed according to his own pleasure, it seemed contrary to all propriety to have an utter stranger thrust into the family so abruptly.

Murdough did not fail to read her expression.

"I have known Miss Lethroe for years," he added, "and this is no sudden move. She has lived in Philadelphia, and I have passed a good deal of time in her presence. You will like her, I am sure."

"Why have you never told me of her before?" asked Dora, a troubled look on her face.

Mr. Murdough cleared his throat twice before replying.

"Well, you know I am naturally a secretive man—at least, so people say—and one never likes to speak too much about affairs of the heart."

The speaker looked like anything but an ardent lover. His face was grim, and he almost scowled upon Dora.

"Well," she said, quietly, "of course I shall receive well any one who is to occupy such a position in regard to you."

"Quite right, my dear; I felt sure I could depend on you. Your mother has now been so long absent from us that there can be no impropriety in my brightening my latter days with one who—ahem!—regards me so highly as Miss Lethroe does."

Probably this sentiment had not been prepared in advance, and it did not seem to please Mr. Murdough. He hurried on, and said he was then going to bring Miss Lethroe, and that they would appear before the end of an hour.

He took his departure, leaving Dora in anything but a happy mood.

"Is it foolishness on my part," she thought, "or will the coming of this woman, as I fear, destroy my peace? I have a presentiment that I shall not like her, and— But I don't know that I can be more discontented than I have been of late."

As she spoke she chanced to look from the window and saw Albert Murdough and Count Royalschoff approaching the house.

She made a gesture of repugnance and promptly retreated from view. Of late both her father and brother had sounded the praises of the so-called Russian persistently in her ears, but she disliked and feared the man.

Poor Dora! She was the only one in that house who was honorable and true, and the hands of her rascally relatives were placing thorns in her path.

Had she suspected that Royalschoff was no Russian, but an adroit city sharper named Jack Huntsman, she might well have wondered what dark hands were moving the pieces over the chess-board of life, and to what end they were playing the game.

She knew enough to be unhappy, but not enough to suspect the gigantic frauds and schemes with which she was surrounded.

In the meanwhile, Alexander Murdough had left the place and gone to another house on West Nineteenth street. There he was promptly admitted, and was soon joined in the parlor by "Miss Lethroe."

It was well for this scion of the "honorable old Creole family" that Bowery Bob was not there to see her, for she was none other than Rosa Reddington!

Yes, "Miss Lethroe" was the accomplice of the various sharpers of our story, and this was the woman Murdough was preparing to take as his wife.

The aged lover, who was going to "brighten his latter days" by his marriage, nodded indifferently.

"Sit down," he said.

"Aren't I going to call on Miss Murdough?" asked Rosa, a little sharply.

"Ah! yes."

"Then why not go now?"

"I don't believe in hurrying a funeral. Do not be alarmed, my dear Miss Lethroe, you shall go to the mansion unless some detective drops on you previously."

Rosa stamped her foot.

"Why do you speak of such things?"

"Detectives are like Old Nick; you can keep them off by ignoring their existence. However, I hope they won't drop on us, and by the end of a fortnight we will, if all goes well, get rid of the latest lot of money, be married, go on our wedding trip and forget to return. But that isn't what I have to say. You know that infernal boy of whom you told me?"

"Yes."

"I've seen him."

"Since last night?"

"To-day."

"Where?"

"In my library."

"What?"

"I repeat it; he has been in my library. The young hound actually called on me."

"Has he discovered that you are Cap Golden?"

"No."

"Then why did he visit you?"

"It seems that old fool of a Hannah tattled to Jocko last night, while the street Arab was in the house, and the latter overheard her say that Albert and Dora were not my children, so he came to tell me about it."

"Great heavens! we are ruined!" cried Rosa, in alarm.

"No, we're not. I'll fix all that. I've arranged for Mr. Bowery Bob to take a ride with me to-night in my carriage, and I'm going to chloroform him and execute the job Chug Bates planned—feed him to the East river fishes."

"Perhaps you'll be as unlucky as Chug was."

"Never you fear," Murdough confidently replied. "Whatever I undertake, I do. Few men could have carried on all the daring schemes I have to my credit, and my success in them argues well for the future."

"What will become of The Coiner when we leave here?" thoughtfully asked Rosa.

"My innocent lamb, do you suppose he will be allowed to go free? No; he would ruin me past redemption. But he will not go free. When he is no longer required as a slave, his life goes out, too, like a candle. Possibly he and Bob will sleep together in the river. But, enough of this. Get ready, Miss Lethroe, and let us call on your future step-daughter. Ah! how you two will love each other!"

CHAPTER IX.

TIDINGS OF THE DIAMONDS.

"W'AT I need most now is developments. I've found out beyond a shadder o' doubt that my game is big game, fur isn't A. Murder, E-squire,

a nabob o' gineros proportions?—but I can't pass over affydavys ter prove that he's inter ther biz. My only holt is ter lay fur some o' ther gang, dog 'em ter whar ther 'queer' is made, an' let loose ther dogs an' cats o' carnage, ez ther poick shot off his jaw ter remark. That's ther bloomin' idee; ef I kin show a few bushels o' bogus yeller coins, I reckon ther coppers won't hump their Grecian noses at me so much arter this.

The speaker was Bob o' the Bowery.

He had eaten dinner since his visit to Alexander Murdough, and was now making a tour of Broadway with the hope that he would happen on Chug Bates or some other member of the gang.

His attentive eyes saw everything but the way, and when he reached the jewelry store of a certain merchant who had often given him a kind word at his Bowery peanut-stand, he saw a fine private turnout in front of it.

Carelessly he glanced at the carriage.

The door was closed and the curtain down, but, just as the boy looked, the latter was for a moment shoved partly aside and a female face became visible.

Then the curtain dropped, but Bob had seen enough to bring him to a sudden halt.

Unless he was greatly mistaken, the lady in the carriage was Rosa Reddington!

Bob was wide awake in a moment. He felt sure he had not been seen, for there was quite a crowd on the sidewalk, passing up and down Broadway, and he quickly slipped into a doorway and stood on the watch.

Ten minutes passed. The female face did not appear, but Bob was patient. He also took advantage of the pause to count his money, and, finding that he had nearly a dollar, fixed his gaze on one of the cheaper class of cabs standing near at hand.

"I may want ye d'rectly," he said, "fur ef Dutches Reddington is in that vehicle, I'm goin' ter foller her ef ther hull town don't collapse wif spontaneous 'bu'stification."

He turned his gaze back and then his face brightened. A man had just come out of the jewelry store, and he was as well known to Bob as was Miss Reddington.

It was his host of the forenoon.

"Hello, Murder, old Boy!" muttered the young detective. "I'll be shook dizzy ef you ain't on ther ram-page ag'in. You 'n' Miss R., is it? Wal, you're a daisy pair, you be, an' I hev an idee in my brain-basket that this hyar visitor ter a jewelry shop means biz. I'm goin' ter know, b'gosh, but ther fu'st duty is ter hive your female chum."

Murdough had entered the carriage with Miss Reddington, and Bob ran to the disengaged cab and told the driver he wanted to hire his outfit.

The man looked superciliously at the speaker's dress.

"You do?" he scoffed.

"That's w'at I said, wa'n't it?"

"Why, ye poor critter, I wouldn't dare to carry you in my cab. Your clothes are so mighty ragged that when we jounced over the pavement they'd fail to hold you together and you'd bu'st."

"See yer," angrily retorted Bob, looking after the retreating carriage, "ef you've lived long enough ter color yer nose that red, an' ain't bu'st with sech a cargo o' gas on board, ye needn't be afeerd o' me. Mebbe ye won't curl yer hairy lip with scorn ef I say them air rags o' mine is lined with Uncle Sam's best gold!"

Here Bob clinked his money—a sound no cabman can resist; and in a very short time Bob was in the vehicle and rolling along in pursuit of the other carriage.

Murdough had taken "Miss Lethroe" to see Dora, and they were now homeward bound, and as neither suspected that they were pursued, and it was supposed that the woman had kept herself closely screened from sight, the expedition was not regarded as injudicious.

Bob, however, had soon won one more move in the game. He knew where Rosa Reddington was stopping.

He made a careful survey of the exterior of the house, and decided that it was not likely that it was a resort of the gang.

It looked thoroughly respectable.

Bob did not try to follow Murdough further, but dismissed his own cab and started to walk back to the jewelry store.

"S'pect I'd impress ther boss more forcible ef I's ter dash up wif four or six steamin' chargers, but sech luxuries cost lucre, an' I ain't got no stock in a gas comp'ny this year. But ther jewelry man knows me, an' it'll be all hunk."

He entered the store, but did not succeed well

at first. A smart clerk was going to "bounce" him because he wore rags instead of diamonds, but the proprietor suddenly appeared and put an end to the trouble.

"Aren't you the boy who keeps a peanut stand on the Bowery?" he asked.

"I'm that same identicle nabob," the young sleuth replied, "an' I want put an interrogatory to ye."

"Do so, by all means. What is it, my boy?"

"You've frequently invested yer nickels at ther curbstome store o' Bob Bowery, Stumpy & Co., ain't ye?"

"Quite often."

"Jes' so, jes' so. Wal, did ever me or Stumpy give ye any cheap talk, or insult ye, or threaten ter absorb ther mud wi' ye, or eroducate ther dust?"

"Never!"

"Then," said Bob, one hand in his pocket and the index finger of the other pointing at the guilty clerk, "allow me fer ter ask wharfore that gorilla threatened ter fire me through ther door? I mean him thar—that chap who would look like a portable cane, only fer ther way he parts his ha'r. That gives him sorter a chimpanzee look."

The clerk retreated to the further end of the room in haste, and the indignant young detective was pacified by the clerk's master.

"Course I don't blame you," said Bob, "but ther young man thar should l'arn that folks o' blue blood an' freckles, like me, are nat'rally o'posed ter horse-style remarks. But that ain't biz, an' biz is w'at me t'y brung me hyar. Will ye 'low me ter put a solemn interrogatory?"

"Certainly. Proceed!"

"D'ye know one A. Murdough, ter wit, name-ly?"

"Mr. Murdough? Oh, yes."

"He war in hyar this P. M.?"

"Yes."

"Will ye kindly 'low me ter ask w'at fer?"

"To get some diamonds set."

"He was, hey?"

"Yes."

"I thought so, b'gosh!"

"And if you had those diamonds, my boy, you would be a very rich man. A thousand dollars for every year of life you've seen would not buy them."

"Hum!" quoth Bob, dryly. "Be they Murder's?"

"Mr. Murdough's? Oh! he owns them, but who will wear them I don't know. Probably his daughter."

"Was they in settin's afore he brung 'em?"

"They had been, but had been taken out. The gems were old heirlooms in his family."

"Bananas!" exclaimed Bob.

"No, no; I said heirlooms. An heirloom is something which has been handed down through successive generations of a family."

"Yas, I know ye said heirloom," coolly replied Bob, "but while ye was talkin' about loam, my mind sorter run on bananas, somehow. Allow me ter ask how long 'twill be afore ye hev them sparklers set, an' ready fer Murder ter take home?"

"Just about a week."

"An' ye won't d'liver 'em afore?"

"See here, my boy, why are you anxious to know about the diamonds?" more seriously asked the jeweler.

Bob was at a loss for a reply for just a moment or so. He saw how easy it would be for the merchant to suspect that he had designs of a burglarious nature on the gems, and, while he could not think of telling the whole truth, felt the need of some explanation to maintain his reputation.

He therefore allowed his face to relax into a smile.

"Wal, I ain't at liberty fer ter elocidate ther hull biz; but I give ye a quiet tip that thar is ter be a ball 'mongst ther Upper Ten next week, an' that them ez wears ther most d'iamonds is ther most admired. Furdermore, thar is a sart'in young woman as is in a terrible takin' ter know ef her rival is goin' ter wear ther Kohinoor, yer know."

Here Bob winked knowingly to the jeweler, and the latter laughed. Bob had told no fiction, but his artful words left due impression on the gentleman's mind.

"I see—it's the old case of feminine jealousy. Well, I wouldn't have been so confidential had I suspected you were the agent of a Murray Hill belle, but I guess there's no great harm done."

"Not by me, ner you, boss; that's ez true ez lemons is lemons," Bob replied.

He did not prolong his call, but left the store and walked on toward Union Square.

"Ef I ain't onter one part o' ther racket I'll

be chewed by rhinosses. Them sparklers w'at was brung over in ther Mayflower, or some other craft, an' was innercently conveyed by me in bananas is now in that 'ere shope ez old Murder's pussional property. Fam'ly heirlooms, is they? So's Sing Sing an' Bartholdi's statue. Murder, ole stock, you're a deep 'un, you be, an' it does me proud ter lock horns wi' sech a big giraffe."

Despite this assertion Bob did not feel quite sure how he was to get the best of Murdough. He had reached Union Square, and he looked up at the top of the tall electric light tower and mentally admitted that it was no higher above the bench than Murdough was above him.

"Ef I's ter go ter ther p'lice an' tell them w'at I know an' suspect, they'd laugh at me. Couldn't git 'em ter descend an' seize them sparklers, nohow, I s'pose. Wal, I dunno ez I want; I'll keep on an' git ther hull game in my hands, an' then I'll jest let loose ther dogs an' cats o' war. I won't be too previous—not for Joseph!"

He continued to sit there for some time, looking as grave as a judge. Several boys were playing in the middle of the square, chasing each other around and diving in and out of the now empty water-basin, but Bob hardly gave them a thought.

All his attention was on business.

He was still there when he saw something which suddenly aroused him.

A colored man passed rapidly by, and in the burly figure and coarse, brutal face Bob was not slow to recognize Jocko.

"Hoss-chestnuts an' huckleberries! hyer is jest ther chance I hanker arter. Jocko, ole chap, I'm arter ye like a dude arter a wasp-waisted coat. I'll fold my tent an' press ther pavement right whar you do!"

The big negro did not appear to have seen Bob; indeed, he had the manner of one wholly absorbed with meditation; and he passed through the square and up Fourth avenue at a rapid pace.

"Now, it seems sorter ree-markable that Mr. Detective Chippley can't strike some o' ther pay-dirt layin' round so promiscu's. W'at was his two eyes gi'n him fer, anyhow, I'd like ter inquire? Why, ef I weighed a hund'ud an' ninety-nine pounds, an' measured seven foot 'round ther bread-basket, like he does, I'd hev this gang inter hock in ther shake o' a rat's tail!"

Bob was not Chippley, but he was an energetic boy, and it is seldom such a young chap gets "left."

He did not intend to be left this time, and he followed closely on Jocko's heels, yet not near enough to run any great risk. He had pulled his cap down over his eyes, and unless the negro looked closely Bob did not fear recognition.

The big man walked up Fourth avenue for several blocks, and then turned to the right. The pursuer felt encouraged. There was a district lying over toward East river which was just the place he thought the missing gang would like as a hiding-place, and he continued his journey in Jocko's rear with fresh confidence.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRAIL GROWS HOT.

Jocko finally aroused from his thoughtful air and seemed to pay more attention to his surroundings, and Bob was not at a loss to account for the fact.

"He's gittin' nigh his roost, an' ez it stands ter reason he'll look ter see ef anybody is doggin' him—he won't want give ther roost away—he'll look ter see whar ther rest o' mankind is. I've got ter be keeful."

The young detective was not only careful but shrewd. The first time Jocko looked squarely around, Bob was standing innocently by a window, looking inside at the goods; the next time, he was out of sight in a doorway.

The negro seemed satisfied and, after going a little further, turned into an area and entered a basement door.

"E Pluribus!" muttered Bob, looking at the building, "ther stock o' B. Bowery, Vidoq & Co., goes up like a b'loon. Jocko seems ter home thar, an' I'll bet a quart o' peanuts, all roasted, that The Coiner an' Nelva is confined thar. Seems jest ther place fer crooked work. Ther gloomy front of spice reminds me o' ther French Bastille at Hong Ho, Chiny. Reg'lar prison look, it bez, an' seems fit ter shet up slaves inter."

He sauntered past the house, scanning it secretly, but maintaining an air of being wholly unconcerned.

Every curtain in the house seemed down, except at the fourth floor windows, and the whole place had a lonely, deserted aspect.

"Wery suspicious!" thought Bob. "I hev an internal feelin' that thar's crooks in thar. Now, ef I was Inspector Byrnes or Superintendent Walling, I'd jest walk in onter them ter onc't, but ez I'm Bowery Bob, I s'pose—Hello!"

The last exclamation was one of surprise and delight, and was occasioned by the appearance at an upper window of a face far from strange to him.

It was that of Nelva, The Coiner's daughter.

Bob looked breathlessly, but even then he noticed that she was pale, and that her face had a weary, longing expression as she gazed out on the open world.

"B'gosh! I'm onter ther trail, sure as dynamite, an' it seems sorter warm. She's thar, an'—Hello!"

Nelva was no longer visible. The pale face had disappeared with a suddenness which led him to believe she had been jerked back by an unfriendly hand, but, just before she disappeared, Bob had seen a new look flash to her face; a sudden brightness, while her gaze was surely turned toward the street.

"She seen me, by jinks!" was his mental comment, "but I dunno ez that'll do much good. Perobably it'll lead her ter think I'm a reg'lar plaster-headed dude, fer she seems ter 'magine all I've got ter do is ter call on ther p'lice an' they'll send a rig'ment o' coppers. But they won't, nary time, fer Joseph—nor fer me, nuther. W'en I take ther war-path I hev ter do my own skulpin'."

The boy loitered near long enough to satisfy himself that Nelva would not reappear, and then, as it was decidedly imprudent to remain where the counterfeiter might see him, walked on down the street.

"I feel a terrible hankerin' ter git inside that temple o' crookedness, an' ef thar's a way ter do it, I'm goin' in," he decided. "I'm aweer they're tough tickets, but a detective hez ter take some risk."

Accordingly, he made his way around to the next street. Judging from the character of the place he thought it possible there might be some means of communication between the two thoroughfares, so that he could get at the suspected house from the rear.

In the first estimate he was proved correct, for not only did he find an alley, but at one point a new building was going up to replace an old one; and these points taken with the fact that the back-yards were full of various kinds of shanties, and distinguished by broken-down fences, made the place a sort of wilderness.

Bob had no trouble in recognizing the particular house of which he was in quest, for he had noted a peculiarity about the chimney, and, as at the front, all the curtains were down.

He eyed it keenly.

"Doors all shet, an' I'll bet they're fastened. How am I goin' ter effect a admittance?"

His way did not appear clear, but after some time he saw what seemed a chance, though a rather desperate one.

The second house from that of the "crooks" was a deserted one, and several boys were playing on the roof, which was flat and easily gained.

From that it was easy to go to the next house, and then the one he wanted to enter lay just beyond.

All this was easily planned, but Bob saw the difficulties in the way of executing his plan. The greatest of these were the danger of being seen and arrested for trespass or burglary, and the probability that all the windows of the further house were fastened.

"Don't a'prove on't a tall," the boy disconsolately muttered. "Thar's a law 'g'in' breakin' an' enterin', an' thar's a place called Sing Sing, but w'at is a feller goin' ter do? Is that little gal an' her dad ter remain ez slaves right hyar in this classic town? Not any, fur Joseph! It's ther duty o' ther hour that I git 'em outer bondage. Abe Lincoln libertized ther colored folkses an', b'gosh, I reckon I've a right ter free ther white ones."

This ingenious argument settled the question in his mind, and he began operations.

It was not hard to gain the roof of the old house, and as the other boys paid no particular attention to him, he easily wandered to the next house.

He was then beside that in which he believed Nelva was held prisoner, and by climbing a wall of brick of a yard or so—the crooks' house being that much higher—he found himself on top of it.

He was now lucky in being on the highest

roof near at hand, for, if he remained in the middle, no one would be likely to see him.

But he did not wish to remain there.

He wished to enter the house.

This was all very well, but how was he to do it? He had relied on finding a scuttle, or some sort of an opening, at the top of the house, and none was visible.

"Scissors an' Shanghai roosters! be I left? Be I on a train that ain't a-goin'? Looks like it, b' gosh! I can't swing off'm ther ruff an' ketch at a winder ez I tumble, fer I ain't up in circus athletics. Nary, but I'm up a stump on a ruff; that's w'at I'm up!"

He was looking lugubriously around when a peculiarity about the roof at one point attracted his attention, and he walked forward.

Then his face suddenly expanded into a smile.

"Come off, kittens an' cats! Ef this hyar ruff ain't all false, part on't is. Mebbe I'll go in yet."

He had discovered that at one point a square piece of tarred canvas, or stout paper, took the place of the usual roof material, and he knew it was designed to deceive casual inspection.

At a short distance it would deceive the eye, and, undoubtedly, that was just what was intended.

Beyond much doubt, a scuttle was just below it.

Examination convinced Bob such was the case, and while he was hesitating to use his knife upon the canvas, he discovered that it was loose. The wind had probably been too much for the nails used to fasten it down. Bob moved it and found the scuttle underneath.

So far he was doing well, but how was he going to open it? If it was not fastened, it would be very strange, considering the care taken to hide it.

Nevertheless, Bob reached down and tried it, and, greatly to his surprise, it came up without trouble. A cavity, with the top of a rude stairway, was revealed beyond.

"Wal, now, this ere is w'at I call myster'us; de-ci-ded-ly myster'us! Hyer's a hook an' warious other nec'sary things fer fastenin' it, but it ain't fastened. Hev I got ther right house? Yas, fer thar's that peccoliar chimbley. All straight ez a bummers' whisky. Furdermore, I'll go in. It's takin' an awful risk, fer I see Blackwell's pasture loomin' up, even now, from ther East river, an' it may loom up wi' me in quod yit, but them slaves hez got ter be got out ef I sing a funeral march ter Sing Song next week."

With this resolution, he took the first step down the ladder. All was dark and silent beyond, but he had no fear of finding things dull inside.

The "gang" was there, and the members thereof were not of the dull kind.

As much thought as the boy gave to the illegal feature of his entrance, he scarcely dwelt at all on the danger he was daring from Chug Bates and his men. He had due respect for law, but not for law-breakers.

Step by step he went down the ladder until the floor was reached. Just ahead he dimly saw a door. What lay beyond?

"I'll find out ef I bu'st ther cast-iron sole o' my slippers!" he muttered, and then turned the knob of the door.

It opened readily, and he saw a dark hall beyond him. He half-expected some enemy to challenge him at once, but all remained quiet.

Which way he ought to move next was uncertain, for he could see but a short distance ahead of him, but as he had seen Nelva at the front of the house, he turned in that direction and went slowly along.

After going a few feet he brought up against a door, which he tried and found unfastened. Hearing no one inside, he opened it and found the room without an occupant.

To settle a question in his mind, he moved forward and looked out on the street.

This convinced him that it was the same room in which he had seen Nelva.

"But she ain't here now, b'gosh, an' whar is she? That is ther p'int fer me ter 'vestigate. I s'pect I'll git inter hock an' be flayed alive, but w'at on't? My cuticle is my own, an' I reckon ef I want offer it ez a sacrifice thar ain't no outside cherub need kick."

Now that he was fairly embarked on his adventure, he began to feel a buoyant confidence, and he retraced his steps and moved toward the other end of the passage.

There he soon found a wall, but no door. There was something else, however; there had been a door, but it was now boarded up.

"Jes' so! Wal, that looks sorter s'picious."

Wonder w'at is in behind this measly old slab concern?"

He listened, and soon became convinced that there was *something* there. To his ears came a clinking such as is made by rattling coins together.

The boy's eyes brightened.

"Gosh all fish-bait! I'm onter 'em fer sure. Ef that thar ain't biz, I'm a forked-tongued Pawnee squaw, wi' a whisky-flask an' a pension-agent's skulp. No doubt Plug-ugly Bates an' Jocko is thar—"

He paused suddenly.

To his keen hearing had come the sound of a well-defined sob, as of some one in trouble and tears. Then a man's voice arose.

"Nelva, child, what is it?"

"Oh! father, I am sick at heart," answered a voice well known to the boy detective; it was that of Nelva.

"My poor child! Would to Heaven I could say something to comfort you, but I am as helpless as you—and as hopeless. Still, I cannot believe you are doomed to this life forever. I have made a large sum of money since these scoundrels put me at work, and though they have not passed any of it off yet, I have gathered from their conversation that they think they now have enough so they may well give up a hazardous business, flee from New York and enjoy their ill-gotten wealth in a safer place."

"But what will become of us then?" Nelva asked.

There was no immediate reply, and when it came the man's voice was unsteady.

"For you I anticipate a release. I cannot believe these men, scoundrels that they are, will be inhuman enough to give you over to the fate which doubtless awaits me."

"Father!"

"Yes, dear."

"What do you mean?"

"I may as well be frank with you and say that it is not at all likely they will allow me to outlive my period of usefulness to them. I know enough to ruin the whole party, and they will not give me the chance. Nelva, my poor child, I fear you will soon be left alone in the world. Death stares me in the face. For myself I care nothing, for the grave is better than this life; but you, my child, you—"

The speaker's voice failed him, and Bob heard the girl begin to sob anew.

"Wal, now, this 'ere is sorter int'restin' es historical facts, but w'at does it amount ter fer ter git Ther Coiner out? Nary thing, b'gosh! an' I've got ter chip in. O' course them two is alone, so—"

He rapped on the wall.

Nelva's sobs at once ceased.

Bob rapped again, and then, as all continued quiet, spoke aloud:

"I say, in thar: jest raise yer bazoo, will yer, an' tell me who you be?"

There was an instant stir.

"Who are you?" quickly asked a voice, which seemed moved with excitement.

"I'm a frien', previdin' ye're ther parties w'at I take ye fer. Ain't you Nelva an' her father?"

"We are," was the quick reply. "Who are you?"

"Wait a bit. Be you alone?"

"Yes."

"Then ask Nelva ef she recomembers ther good-lookin' young nabob in rags who see'd her at Houston street w'en ole Riddle wanted ter cut out his tongue."

"Oh, father," cried the girl's voice; "it is he—it is the brave boy!"

"I'm ther boy; that's sart'in ez fish-cakes; but don't spend no time in describin' my brave valor. That ain't important. You asked me ter git ye out o' bondage, an' that is why I'm hyar. Tell me how ter do it, quicker'n ther gasp o' a sick hen!"

Both The Coiner and his daughter spoke at once, so that Bob did not understand what was said; but the former's voice then arose, agitatedly:

"Noble youth, if you can rescue us I will forever bless you for my child's sake. There is but one way to us. Leave the passage where you are by means of the east door; descend the stairs; pass through the room at the left; come up another stairway, and our door is at the head of the ascent. Turn the key, which is in the lock, and we will see you."

"Correct, fer prairie chickens. Prepare fer a banquet at Delmonico's, fer I'm a-comin'! Wait fer me!"

Bob turned away and easily found the first door mentioned by The Coiner. This he opened, and saw the stairs just beyond.

He had forgotten to ask where the members of the gang were, but as he thus invaded the interior of the place he fully realized the danger he was running, and moved with corresponding care. Discovery by them would probably be fatal to him.

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING UNDER THE TABLE.

Bob moved with extreme care, but the silence continued and he reached the foot of the stairs. He then turned to the left, as directed, passed through a small room, found a second stairway and began to ascend.

So far his success had been greater than he dared hope, though it was not particularly surprising. Of course when the counterfeiters made the elevated workshop for their slave-workman, they must have taken such precautions to prevent his escape that it would not be necessary to watch him all the time.

The explorer went briskly up the stairs, found the key in the lock as The Coiner had promised, and did not hesitate to turn it.

The bolt clicked, and then the door was opened from the inside.

Bob looked in silent wonder at the view vouchsafed him. He saw Nelva, as pretty and as sad as ever; and he saw an old man over whose breast swept a snow-white beard of remarkable length. He had a grave, sad, thoughtful look, and, as his presence was imposing, might have been mistaken for a philosopher.

Beyond them was a room, and it was clear The Coiner had lately been at work. Several gold pieces lay on the table, as did some instruments which were new to the boy, but, as he readily surmised, were those used in making the bogus coins.

The room had a sort of fascination for the boy, and he remained silent until Nelva moved quickly forward and grasped his hand.

"Brave boy!" she exclaimed, "I thought you would come, and I hope you will be rewarded for it by One who can reward you."

"Thank you," Bob answered, "but I sorter like ther pay I'm gittin' now, an' ef we git outer hock I'm willin' you should keep on a-thankin' me. But this ain't biz, an' biz is ther lever o' success. We wanten git outer hyar quicker'n a copper kin club seven men. Mister, I take it you're Nelva's dad. Ef so, le's all slide!"

Bob's idea was eminently sensible, and he would soon have had the party started, but just then there was a sound of voices on the floor below and Nelva's face became white.

"Oh! they're coming—they're coming!" she cried.

"Yes, it's Gnarl Riddle; I know his voice," added The Coiner, like one in a horrible dream.

Bob was the only one who kept his wits about him, and he at once saw the irritating and dangerous fix he was in. It was impossible to retreat the way he had come, and there was no other way to leave the room. Even the window was boarded up, the necessary light being that of gas.

His escape was cut off, and, in a moment more, no doubt, Gnarl Riddle and his companion would be in the room.

Discovery meant death to Bob.

What was to be done?

It was very fortunate that the young detective retained his presence of mind. He used his eyes like a flash, and then closed the door. It was barely done when the voices sounded from the foot of the stairs.

"I've got ter hide," said Bob, "an' that there table is jist ther place. Ther cloth on't will hide me, an' do you two brace up an' git ter work, an' look sorter nat'ral. Ef ye give ther racket away we'll git flagitated. Mind yer eyes now, pards!"

The last warning was spoken from under the table, to which the boy had retreated. This article of furniture was covered with a red spread which fell on all sides so as to completely hide what was within.

Then he dropped the cloth as footsteps sounded on the stairs nearer at hand, and The Coiner and Nelva had sufficient nerve to resume work with a degree of calmness.

"W'at Gnarl Fiddle will say when he finds ther door unlocked, I dunno," thought Bob, "but I s'pect he'll rais ha'r, b'gosh!"

Most luckily, Riddle did not make the discovery. He was coming up with Chug Bates, and chattering angrily about something, and when he reached the door and gave the key a vicious half-turn, he failed to notice that no bolt moved, and opened the door with a fortunate unconsciousness that it had been previously unlocked.

"Hello!" thought Bob, cautiously reconnoiter-

ing, "so Mr. Plug Bates is t'other one. Wal, they make a sweet couple, an' they'd do fer modern candy ef thar wa'n't quite so much arsenic inter ther compersition."

Old Riddle bustled in and looked at his slaves.

"Well, well," he said, sharply, "you haven't turned off much work."

"Do you want your coins spoiled?" calmly asked Nelva's father.

"No, but I want them made."

"I am making them," was the imperturbable reply.

"Like a snail!" snapped old Gnarl.

The Coiner laid down the die he had been holding.

"You need not expect to hurry me, Gnarl Riddle. I have labored for you for months and years at a work I detest, turning out counterfeit money, but you are aware that it has not been a work of love. I have simply done it because my brain would have reeled and I would have become mad, had it not been for this employment. So far as being hurried is concerned, you have tried that before."

"Malediction! you are a saucy dog!" muttered Riddle, though his tone was less irritable than before; he knew the slave was not to be influenced by threats.

The Coiner's lip curled with disdain.

"I am still master of my own tongue, and no one shall control that. I was born as free as any of you, and you know what I would be had not an infamous scoundrel put me here—as a slave! A slave in the heart of New York! How many people would believe such a thing possible?"

The speaker's voice trembled with emotion, but Bates made an impatient gesture.

"Oh! that's rothing," he said; "there are many other such cases between the Battery and High Bridge. One-half of New York don't suspect what the other half is doing, and there are more strange things here than Munchausen ever conjured from his brain. But enough of this. We came to ask if you can fill another roll within three days."

The Coiner meditated.

"Possibly I can. It won't be very hard work. I think it probable."

"Do this," said Riddle, "and we will try and do you some favor in return."

His voice was unusually bland, but the slave did not fail to notice a secret and sinister glance toward Chug Bates, and various other circumstances led The Coiner to think:

"The end is near. This lot is to be my last work, and then, if I do not escape, they will kill me!"

Despite this startling theory, he showed no emotion, and did not seem half so much concerned as was Fowery Bob under the table.

"You darned measly skunks!" he thought, looking at Riddle and Bates, "I'd jest like ter weigh 'bout seven hundred an' eighty-nine pounds now, an' ef I wouldn't give ther two cn ye ther wu'st lammin' you ever had, I'd be chawed by a brindled poodle ter hash!"

The Bowery ley had good cause to feel disturbed, and he knew it. If the two men went out and locked the door—and, of course, they would lock it—he and the slaves would be on the wrong side, and, instead of rescuing them, he would simply be one more prisoner added to the score.

The Coiner said he had been confined there "for months and years." Reckoning from this basis, how soon might Bob o' the Bowery expect to get out?

"B'gosh, somethin' must be did. Inactivity won't do—not fer Joseph! Ef I swim 'round hyar like a trout under a ledge, I'll be bound ez 'prentice ter them measly counterfeiters. But what's ter le did? W'at kin I do?"

And the young detective scratched his head in dire perplexity.

His situation was, indeed, a desperate one. If once the key was turned up on him, good-by to thoughts of escape; while if he was discovered, the chances were he would be murdered without compunction.

On the other hand, when resistance was thought of, The Coiner was a very slight man, and did not seem able to fight successfully, and he—Bob—was but a boy. Probably Chug Bates would handle them both unaided, and Gnarl Riddle, though well advanced in years, would be no mean factor in the game.

"An' perobably they is both armed ter ther teeth, hip an' thigh, while I ain't got no weepens but a jack-knife. Gosh all tater-diggers! I'll buy out a gun-shop ez soon ez I strike firm terror, or terror firma, or— But see yer, ef something ain't did thar will be a wacancy in ther firm o' B. Bowery, Stumpy & Co."

This fact impressed itself more and more on Bob's mind, and as he was really afraid of no danger, he had begun to contemplate a bold attack on Chug Bates, when that young man sauntered up to the table to examine the coins, thus bringing himself within a few inches of Bowery Bob.

The temptation was too strong to be resisted, and the boy at once resolved to proceed to hostilities. He did so with a vengeance.

Reaching out, he seized Chug's ankles, and then gave a tremendous jerk. The counterfeiter had started at the first feeling of Bob's fingers, but that was all he had time to do. The boy had not pulled in vain; Mr. Bates's feet flew from under him, and he went down like a log.

Lucky for our friends, he fell partly against a chair, or the crash might have been loud enough to bring others of the gang to the scene.

This occurrence caused universal surprise, especially to Gnarl Riddle, but Bob did not wait for him or Chug to recover lost composure. He darted from under the table and, seizing a stool, waited to menace Bates if he tried to rise, but, by a piece of great good fortune, that young scoundrel had struck his head so heavily on the chair in falling that he lay perfectly insensible.

As Bob saw this he flew between Gnarl and the door.

"Surrender, you p'ison 'ole boss-fly!" he ordered. "We are three ter one, an' ef you don't give in we'll sweep ther floor up clean wi' ye. Cover him wi' yer repeatin'-rifle, an'— Hi! that's it!"

The Coiner had moved at last. Bob's operations had seemed to bewilder him as much as they did Gnarl, but as he realized that the fight against his bitter enemies was at last begun in earnest, he sprang toward Riddle like a tiger.

"Surrender!" he cried, in a thrilling voice. "Surrender, you scoundrel, or I will not be responsible for what I do!"

"Sponsible?" cried Bob; "course we won't. Ef that measly ole Pagin s'pects us ter sign any sash bonds, he's way off his Bartholdi pedestal. Give him ther straight catechism, pard!"

The Coiner was terribly in earnest, and though he did not offer violence, his flashing eyes completely awed Riddle. The latter at once became a craven and begged for mercy.

"That's all hunk ez fur ez it goes," said Bob, "but we don't want'er forgit that Jocko may be close at hand, an' I reckon he could slap ther hull on us inter quod in ther tremor o' a mule's ankle-j'int. Jest you hol' ther fort, pard, an' I'll use them strings I see yender, an' bind these cannibawls ez Gulliver bound ther Lillypods."

His quick eyes had discovered some cords which were just suited to the work in hand, and he was not long in getting them.

Of course Bates was the most dangerous person, and Bob proceeded to wind the cords around him until he was totally helpless. He then performed a like service for Riddle, who dared not rebel, though his eyes glared the wrath he could not wholly hide.

The Coiner helped in the last part of the work, and showed a cool resolution which pleased the young detective.

"Now, then," said the latter, "we've gone so fur like a Maud S. trotter, but I observe some ruts in ther road jest ahead. How're we ter avoid 'em? In other words, though we hev got ther fust knock-down, we're still in ther enemy's sugar-box, an' I reckon Jocko may want'er vote about our departur'."

CHAPTER XII.

BOB'S "FUN" CONTINUES.

THE COINER looked troubled at the last remark.

"The black giant is in the house; I heard him only a short time ago," he said.

"Then that p'int is settled," observed Bob. "We don't want ter see Jocko—not fer Joseph! He would chaw us all up like cheese. Now, ef my pardner, Stumpy, was hyar, 'twould be different, fer Stumpy is an awful slugger, but he ain't hyar. Now, low me ter ask"—here Bob lowered his voice—"if you kin climb over ther ruff?"

"Any way!" exclaimed The Coiner; "any way, so long as we escape."

"I tried to get out that way," said Nelva. "They don't always keep me shut up in one room, but make me do other work; and I got away and went to the scuttle, unfastened it and tried to raise it, but I couldn't lift it."

"That so? Wal, now, that s'plains why I found ther roof-door unfastened. Wal, ef ye kin amble that way, let's be scratchin' ther slates ez soon ez possible."

"But these men," interrupted The Coiner. "They will give the alarm."

"Not ef we stuff their mouths wi' cloth, tie 'em tergether so they can't wabble, an' lock ther door on 'em."

"A capital idea, my boy. Let it be done at once."

They lost no time, and in a very few minutes Riddle and Bates were secured as indicated, and all was ready for departure.

They left the room, locked the door, and moved down-stairs cautiously, expecting every moment to see Jocko appear. All remained silent, however, and they went on.

Bob saw with some uneasiness that now that escape seemed quite possible, the old man trembled, and seemed to lose entirely his late cool self-possession. He had grown stonily calm in captivity, but the reaction greatly weakened him now.

"I s'pect he's seen trouble enough ter shake ther teeth outer Bartholdi's statute," thought Bob, "an' this narvousness is nat'ral, but it is mighty inconvenient."

No one obstructed their way, and Bob retraced his steps up the other stairway, through the passage and up the last flight of stairs—that which led to the roof.

As he raised the scuttle door he was surprised to see that it was already night. He had not supposed it was so late, and in the prison-room all hours were the same, but if the darkness made their descent more difficult, it would also hide their movements from prying eyes.

Bob took the lead wholly, for The Coiner was worse than Nelva; but the boy was equal to the demands of the occasion. As before said, he had no great trouble in gaining the roof of Riddle's house, and the same remark will apply to their retreat.

In due time they stood on the ground.

"Whar now?" Bob asked.

"I don't know," the old man helplessly replied.

"Have you any frien's?"

"Not one."

"Wal, shan't we call on ther p'lice an' hev ther gang gobbled up inter bondage?"

"No, no; don't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Gnarl Riddle and—and some one else—would kill me."

"Not ef they was slapped inter a cell."

"I dare not molest them; let us go away; far away from them."

Bob scratched his head. He did not relish the idea of losing such a chance, and disliked to comply with an idea brought about by mental and physical weakness.

Luckily, Nelva proved clear-headed.

"Father is overcome now, and what he needs is a good night's rest," she said, in a low voice. "He is not friendless, and he will be ready for the fight to-morrow, but, it is best we should all rest to-night. Still, we have no money."

Bob saw his way clear by this time.

"Don't ye worry 'bout that, fur I kin give ye quarters on Macdougall street, ef 'tain't too high-toned fer comfort. That's jest w'at I'll do, an' I'd like ter see a yarler cab bounsin' this way."

The cab did not appear, but when they started in search of one, only a few yards had been gone when the very article desired made its appearance. As Bob still had money enough for the purpose, passage was engaged and they rolled away toward Macdougall street.

Bob o' the Bowery was not inclined to rest on his oars, and he only waited to see his new proteges safely housed, after which he proposed to make things lively for the gang. At last he felt sure he had the means of securing their arrest, and he intended to do it.

The house on Macdougall street was that of honest friends of his, and in due time he had The Coiner and his daughter there. They were kindly received, and the old man grew somewhat calmer, but still protested against beginning hostilities against his enemies—an idea so different from his usual one that Bob knew he would be sorry as soon as he regained his mental vigor.

"He'll hev ter hev his own way now, I s'pose, but I'm my own boss an' I ain't afeerd o' them measly blokes, not fur Joseph. Furdmore, I'm goin' on ther war-path with more paint onter my face than Murray Hill belles wear, b'gosh! I reckon I'll hev some more fun wi' them ravenin' wolves."

He left the house and started up-town again, anxious to resume his "fun," but had gone but a few rods when a man loomed up in his path in such a way as to force him to stop.

He looked up and saw what appeared to be a middle-aged person with red hair and beard.

"Hallo, boy," he bluffly saluted, "can I get you to do an errand?"

"Not fur Joseph," was the terse reply.

"I don't care about Joseph; this errand is for me."

"Wal, I can't do it 'cause I'm otherwise engaged, but thar is plenty o' poor boys 'round who'll very like snap at ther chance like a red-nosed man at a whisky bottle."

"But won't a dollar be any object to you?" persisted the man.

"Nary object."

"Then I'll give two dollars."

Bob opened his eyes somewhat larger, for such pertinacity surprised him. As he had indicated, there were a good many other boys near at hand, and he could not see what object the man had in urging him.

"W'at's ther errand?" he asked, looking sharply at the red-whiskered man.

"I want a package carried to No. —, Creshy street."

This was but a very short distance away, and Bob's wonder increased. Two dollars for five minutes' work! What did it mean?

"W'at sort o' a package?"

"This one," and the man produced a flat parcel from beneath his coat. "You see it is small. If you will carry it, and be sure and deliver it to no one but the Reverend Mr. Mossey, for whom it is intended, you shall have the money—the two dollars."

The bait was large, but, in Bob's opinion, it did not half-cover the hook. Several questions naturally suggested themselves. Why didn't the man carry his own package, since he could have done it in the time already wasted? Why was he willing to pay at such a rate? Above all, why was he so determined to secure Bob as his agent?

These questions set the boy to thinking, and it began to dawn upon him that there was something familiar in the red-whiskered man's voice.

Where and when had he heard it before?

It suddenly flashed upon him whose voice sounded like this person's, and he was wide-awake in an instant. Unless he was greatly mistaken, Albert Murdough stood before him.

This was an important discovery, but not a muscle of Bob's face betrayed him. He was thinking like a flash, however. Events had already led him to believe that Albert was nearly as bad as his father, and he clearly saw a plot to lure him into a house where others of the gang were ready to seize him.

Probably Alexander Murdough had discovered that Bob was not likely to take that ride in the close carriage with him, and intended to get him out of the way otherwise.

Acting on this belief, the boy had his answer ready without suspicious delay.

"Wal, I'm 'portantly engaged fer jest about ten minutes, but ef you kin wait till I run over ter Washington Park, I'll come back then an' ketch onter yer cash fur keeps."

"Are you sure to be back?"

"Sart'in sure."

"And in ten minutes?"

"Fifteen at ther outside."

"Then I'll wait for you."

"All right; I'll be off."

"You'll find me right here, boy, so don't disappoint me, as I want a trusty messenger."

"You kin depend on me," replied Bob, as he hurried away, but he muttered to himself: "Yas, you kin depend on me not ter put my head inter that trap—not fer Joseph! I can't see very wal wi' my blind eye, but kin tell when I run ag'in' a brick house. Now, I don't like ter postpone my visit ter ther p'lice, but I feel a terrible bankcrin' fer ter see that Creshy street house. 'Tain't impossible I may see some o' ther gang 'round thar, an' I'll give 'em a try."

He accordingly made a detour and worked around to where the "Reverend Mr. Mossey" was said to live, keeping in the shadows as much as possible.

The house proved to be a plain, old two-story concern, which had evidently stood there a long time, but still looked respectable enough.

Bob reconnoitered carefully, but all his efforts failed to discover any one about the place. There was a light in one room, but the curtain was down and all was quiet and monotonous.

While thus engaged the boy detective caught sight of a passer-by, and pounced upon him in a moment. It was his friend Wrixley, the detective, and it occurred to Bob that here was just the person to lead the raid on Gnarl Riddle's lair, if the detective could be drawn into the game.

So he poured out his story rapidly and ear-

nestly, very much pleased to see Wrixley listen carefully, but he was interrupted before he was fairly through.

"Capture them?" repeated Wrixley. "You bet I will. Oddly enough, my own game has worked around to include Riddle and Bates, and I only wish I could strike a certain 'High-heeled Moll,' as well as the two men. Rest easy, Bob, for I'll attend to them. But won't you accompany me?"

"Can't, possibly. I'm onter another lay, an' ther trail is red-hot an' still a-heatin'. Jest you gobble Gnarl an' Plug Bates, an' I'll chuck in my blessin'. Ketch on?"

"Yes; and I'm off. Wish you good luck here."

"Thank you, an' I'll try ter give ye a clean bill o' health w'en we meet. These ere is pipin' times, ez ther plumber said ter ther landlord; an' them ez pulls ther wires sees ther battery. So-long, Wrix!"

The detective went off, and Bowery Bob was left to give all his attention to the other case.

How to proceed he did not exactly know, but as all continued quiet where he was, he began to feel a desire to get another look at disguised Albert Murdough. After some hesitation he began moving cautiously toward where he had left him, but had gone only a short distance when he perceived two men talking on a corner.

At first sight he recognized one of them as Albert, and he at once felt a strong desire to overhear what was being said.

Circumstances were in his favor, and he worked around to a covered wagon that had been stabled for the night on the street, in the peculiar way common to New York, and, in its shadow, listened unobserved.

Albert was speaking.

"I don't intend to remain in this city a day longer than is necessary," he said; "for matters have got so hot that I feel the need of a European tour. Fact is, when I began with Cap Golden's band I never thought I'd go so far, and I'm a bit afraid."

"Nonsense!" replied the other. "There is no danger. The police would never suspect you to be Ethan Eames!"

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB FALLS OVER SOMETHING.

BOWERY BOB could not avoid a start. As we know, he had clearly decided that Albert Murdough was anything but an honest man, but here was plain evidence that he was a first-class rascal.

When Jack Huntsman gave the bananas—and diamonds—to the young detective, he had directed that they be delivered to "Ethan Eames" or Rosa Reddington.

That showed that Eames was in the diamond scheme, and now he knew that "Eames" was Albert Murdough.

"Gosh ter rattlesnakes! I never said truer than w'en I lowed I was arter big game. They is big; bigger than ther Produce Exchange an' a twenty-seven story house all inter one. But w'at's ther odds? Ef ther firm o' B. Bowery, Vidoq and Pinkerton can't hold their own, I'll never wag my left ear ag'in!"

Meanwhile, the conversation continued.

"No, suspicion has not yet fixed upon me," said Albert, "but who knows when it will? There is that confounded boy, Bob o' the Bowery; he's nosing around in a way I don't like, and he may learn too much."

"That confounded boy" grinned in high glee.

"But if we get him into the old house, we'll soon fix his flint."

"We've not got him in there yet."

"Do you anticipate failure?"

"I don't know, Alf. Fact is, am nervous and played out. I don't think I was intended for a knave."

"You've done well, so far."

"My inclinations are, I regret to say, bad enough, but I lack the boldness of a veteran rascal. Dissipation brought me to this, Alf. I got to drinking, and then fell afoul of Cap Golden. He has been my evil genius. He led me on step by step, until I am now a pal of the gang. Golden is a perfect fiend; sometimes I think it was a deliberate plot on his part to ruin me. Who is he?"

"Nobody but himself knows."

"He is a devil!" declared Albert, bitterly.

"He makes a great chief. What are Riddle, Bates and Huntsman, compared with him?"

"Subordinate rascals," said Albert, tersely.

"Cap Golden is the greatest scoundrel that ever lived."

"See here, Ethan, it strikes me your loyalty is wavering," said Alf, suspiciously.

"Remember how I am situated," replied Murdough, gloomily. "I am a member of a proud, rich and honorable old family. See where I am!"

"Strikes me your governor, old Alexander, is no saint. What about his resolution to marry Miss Reddington?"

"That puzzles me," said the young man. "Father knows just what she is—"

"Does he know she is High-heeled Moll?"

Bowery Bob started. With his retentive memory, he had not forgotten that Wrixley had mentioned this ver same name.

"He knows all," Albert answered.

"Yet he will marry her?"

"Yes."

"Well, it strikes me the governor is no angel."

"The Murdoughs have lost their high sense of honor. Only Dora, my sister, is like our ancestors."

"And you are trying to marry her to Jack Huntsman?"

"It's none of my work."

"You took Jack to the house as Count Royalschoff."

"I had to, Jack requested, and Cap Golden ordered, it."

"I'll bet a dollar Dora don't marry your bogus Russian, just the same. By the way, when does the marriage of your pater and High-heeled Moll take place?"

"To-night."

"To-night!"

"Yes."

"Isn't that sudden?"

"Yes; for some reason, father sees fit to hurry it up, and there is to be a private ceremony this evening at ten. That's why I am in such haste. And that reminds me, I must now go and meet Bob o' the Bowery. I hope our decoy scheme will work."

Albert hurried away, leaving Alf gazing after him.

"Poor, weak-minded fool!" he muttered, "he little suspects that he is but a cat's-paw for others. I rather pity him, but if such as he will take to evil ways, we who are sharks from necessity must receive them—and their money."

He paused to light a cigar, while Bob o' the Bowery, who had listened to all with eager attention, shut one eye and screwed his face into a remarkable expression.

"Wal, this revelation takes ther fodder, b'gosh! I've got onter some vallyble p'int an' I'm a-goin' ter make ther wheel o' justice revolve like a Western blizzard was a-playin' onter it. One thing sticks me, though; I know who Cap Golden is, ef ther rest o' ther gang don't; an' I know he an' Alexander Murdough, ter wit, namely, is one an' ther same scallawag. But ef sech is ther case, why hez he led Albert, his son, adown ther crooked path o' sin an' moral smash-up?"

Bob scratched his head vigorously, but no answer came.

"So ther vener'ble Alex an' Rosa is gwine ter hitch up at ten this eve? Wal, mebbe they will, but I hev a faint glimmer o' doubt ef ther obsequies takes place. Ef I kin see Wrixley an' tell him Rosa Reddington is High-heeled Moll, et scattery, I don't b'lieve she'll be a blush-in' bride ter-night—not fur Joseph. Hello!"

Another man had appeared and paused before Alf, and Bob lost no interest in the case.

"I'll be broke on ther wheel ef 'tain't ther bogus Russian, Count No-count! Now, then, w'at hez he got ter say?"

"Hallo, Huntsman!" saluted Alf.

"Not so loud," replied Jack. "Remember I am Count Royalschoff. Are you busy?"

"No. Why?"

"Come in and get a pull of whisky. I need bracing up, and I have a word to say to you."

Alf agreed and the two moved down the street. So did Bowery Bob. He was all alive to the demands of the occasion, and intended to overhear what was said if such a thing was possible.

"I opine things is comin' ter a focus, an' ef I was a reg'lar commissioned detective, I'd hev these measly skunks inter hock afore another sun-up. But we'll see, sez ther blind man."

He followed Jack and Alf to a saloon successfully, and then, seeing that it was well filled with other customers, boldly entered close behind them.

They went to the bar, while Bob looked eagerly around. There were four tables in the room, but all were filled save one. He immediately decided that there a chance of their taking that, and as it was just beside a screen made like a

window-blind, he took position behind the screen and waited.

The two men took their drinks and then came and sat down as he had hoped.

"Now, then, to business," said the bogus Russian. "What do you think of the outlook?"

"On the coin business?"

"Hush! What are you saying? None of that! Yes, I mean on that point."

"All lovely, ain't it?"

"Is it?"

"I think so."

"I don't!"

"Why not?"

"I suspect that Cap Golden intends to play us false, scoop in the boodle and leave all the rest of the gang to whistle for their share."

"The blazes you do!"

"That's just my idea."

"But I can hardly believe Golden is such a man."

"Well, I believe it. He is a long-headed old fellow, and as selfish as Old Nick himself. He played his cards well, and while all the rest of us are well known in the gang, who can say who Cap Golden is?"

"That's a fact," thoughtfully admitted Alf.

"Well, if he should slip with the cash, how could we find him—and the cash?"

"We should have a hard job, of course, but you are proceeding from the standpoint that he is likely to run away. Have you any real reason for believing he may do this?"

"I have some mighty strong suspicions."

"Well, what do you propose?"

Huntsman looked around to make sure no one was looking, and then, bending forward, he lowered his voice.

"I propose just this: It is dog eat dog, and we don't want to get left. Consequently, in order to prevent Cap Golden from running away with the boodle, we must run away with it ourselves!"

"And turn traitor?" cried Alf.

"Rubbish! Haven't I warned you what the captain intends? Shall he win, or shall we?"

"But there is no proof that he intends such a thing."

Huntsman uttered an oath.

"Well, if you will have the proof, here goes: Cap Golden is Alexander Murdough. Oh! you're surprised, are you? Well, I'm not. I've been onto this thing for some time, and what I've told is not all that I know. Listen!"

Jack leaned still further forward and uttered a few rapid sentences which left both Alf and Bob o' the Bowery mute with surprise. The boy crouched behind the screen and stared with enlarged eyes, for the revelation was a startling one, but before another word could be said there came an unexpected interruption.

A drunken man had surged through the door, and he suddenly lost his balance, stumbled against Bob, who tried in vain to get out of the way; and then the two went crashing against the screen; the screen fell over upon the table; and Bob and the drunkard were sprawled out before the eyes of the conspirators.

Bob was up in a moment, but he came directly into the view of the men, and the bogus Russian looked decidedly scared.

He had recognized the boy.

For an instant he seemed dazed, but criminals of his caliber are not long at fault.

He sprang forward and seized Bob's arm.

"See here!" he exclaimed, "didn't I tell you to keep away from saloons? You just make tracks for home, or I'll cuff you!"

"K'rect fur water-bugs!" coolly replied the Bowery boy. "All I want is fer yer ter let go my arm an' I'll slide. W'at, be ye still hol' on't?"

"I reckon I'll take you home."

And Huntsman tried to drag Bob along. He knew his only hope was to get him away where he could not use his nimble tongue, and it was his dodge to pretend the lad was his son. If he could once get him clear of the saloon, and to a retired place, he would soon still that tongue.

But Bob clasped a post and held on tightly.

"No, sirree, hoss-fly!" he retorted. "I ain't goin' yer way jes' now. Call 'round 'bout two o'clock next week."

Huntsman's eyes flashed, and he disregarded the presence of all observers and grasped Bob's throat.

"Come with me!" he hissed, wild with fear and rage, "or I'll strangle you!"

"No, ye don't; not fur Joseph!" retorted Bob, still hanging to the post, and reading aright the murderous expression in his enemy's eyes; and then a happy thought struck him, and he reached up, caught the false beard and pulled it from its owner's face.

"Look hyar, all ye clam-eaters!" he cried,

"this hyar is Jack Huntsman, a law-breaker, an' ther officers is jest a-hankerin' ter git him inter hock fer—"

One of the crowd started forward.

"What's this, boy?" he demanded. "Do you say this is Jack Huntsman? I want that man, and I hereby arrest him. I am Detective Chippley!"

Bob laughed aloud; for he saw that the man-hunter had not recognized him, and such stupidity seemed amazing.

"Oh! is it you, Chippley?" he cried. "Are you sure it is you, ole boy? But you don't know me, ner you didn't know Jack Huntsman till I tole ye all. Gosh ter goslin's, Chip, ef I's you I'd kerry my photo all ther while so's not ter git lost!"

CHAPTER XIV.

BOB ATTENDS A WEDDING.

MR. DETECTIVE CHIPPLEY turned very red upon hearing this sarcastic talk, but he tried to hide his emotions.

"Know you?" he cried. "Of course I know you! I've seen you before to-day, and I've marked you as a future candidate for Sing Sing."

"Wal, I ain't got thar yet, an' ef I depend on you fer indentification, I reckon ez I won't very soon."

There was a jeer from the crowd, which was not inclined to love officers of any kind, and Jack Huntsman, who had been trying to get in his protestation, became encouraged to try and jerk his arm away; but Chippley, anxious to wreak his vengeance on some one, drew his official club and fell upon the unhappy Count Ivan Royalschoff-Huntsman in the business-like way which officers have when they take to the war-path, and Bob seized the chance and slipped out of the place.

"No need o' me in thar—not fer Joseph! Ole Chip is onter a reg'lar t'ar, with blood inter his blind eye, an' he'll yank ther Russian inter quod 'thout my help, w'ile I've got biz elsewhar. Oh! Susannah X. Slowboy, ef I kin find my pard, Wrixley, I'll jes' make Rome howl ter-night. I'm off arter him like lightnin' slidin' down a greased cloud!"

If he did not go as he said, he certainly made good time, and with all possible haste made his way to the precinct station where he had reason to believe Wrixley might be found.

Luckily he met the detective just leaving, and from him learned that the counterfeiters' house had been raided, and Gnarl Riddle, Chug Bates, Jocko and Hannah secured just as they were on the point of leaving; the two former having been released by the negro.

Bob, all excitement, stopped Wrixley and told him what new developments he had fallen to, and though his friend was a good deal surprised, he did not think of doubting his word.

"Well, if you haven't a natural tact for getting hold of points, I'm a liar!" declared Wrixley.

"Jes' w'at Gus Redding said w'en I helped him in a detective case."

"By the way, I thought Redding did well by you. Why are you still in rags?"

"My genial frien', why are you still a detective? You're rich ez Solomon—or was it Moses?—but ye still keep on in biz."

"I should be unhappy out of it."

"Wal, pard, I'd be onhappy out o' these aristocratic rags! I needn't w'ar 'em, fer I hez money in ther bank, an' I'm a pusson o' infloence on Wall street an' Pier 11, 111, North river, but these hyar rags is my bes' frien's; they've been w' me a long time an' sarved me wal, an' 'tain't in my warm heart fer ter shake 'em now they're ole an' gray—not fer Joseph! But see yere, Wrix, let's git a regiment o' coppers an' a cannon, an' go an' stop old Murder from j'inin' hisself in weedlock ter High-heeled Moll."

This was sensible advice, and preparations were at once made for a descent on the pretty gang of law-breakers who were making the better part of New York responsible for hiding them.

It was nine o'clock before they were ready to start, however, and half an hour later when they neared Murdough mansion. There was nothing there to indicate that such a thing as a marriage was to take place, and for awhile Wrixley hesitated.

"If there is a mistake, we shall make a pretty mess of it by descending on a nabob like this," he said.

"Jes' you see hyar," observed Bob, "I'm ginerally sure o' my dough afore I bake my bread, an' I give ye a straight tip on this biz,

but I hev an idee that kin be played ef you think best. I hev some 'quaintance wi' a s'pectable colored youth who is a sarvint here—his name is Julius, an' I won his 'fections by givin' him an orange—an' ef you say so, I kin apply at ther basement door and 'vestigate afore we make ther ginerall raid."

Wrixley would not have decided in favor of this plan, but the other officers were very much for it, so Bob prepared for the attempt.

He rapped boldly at the basement door, and, very much to his delight, it was opened by Julius.

"Hello!" said the small negro, promptly.

"Come in!"

Bob had not expected so cordial a welcome, but he did not fail to accept the invitation. He entered.

"Come right inter de kitchen."

Again Bob obeyed, but when Julius turned about his eyes looked like two full moons rising against a dark sky.

"Wh—wh—what!" he stammered.

"I didn't speak, my colored frien'."

"Why, I fro't 'twas Harry."

"Wal, 'tain't Harry, ez you hev now diskivered," Bob replied, "but I trust I ain't none ther less welcome by my ole frien'. Julius, ole stock, yer ain't forgot ther orange I gi'n ye hev yer?"

"No," said the negro, "mebbe you've got a nuther orange?"

"I ain't, not now, Mr. Julius. But do ye admire ther d'licious fruit ye mention?"

"Bet yer life, I do."

"Then you shell hev a dozen on 'em ter-morrer mornin'. A dozen! Gosh all porous-plasters! yer shall hev a cart-load. Yes, sirree, jes' ez many ez a hoss kin haul. I'll go ter Patsy McOshaunaghran—he's ther chap w'at owns ther spirited white hoss wi' ther blind eye an' chronic whoopin'-cough—it's ther hoss has ther cough—an' Pa sy shall bring ye a hull tip-cart load o' oranges, b'gosh!"

Here Bob put one arm akimbo and, flourishing the other hand, added:

"I'm nat'rally ginerous, an' ef thar's any one thing I's profligate of, it's oranges!"

"Ah! but you's foolin' me now," said Julius.

"You won't gib away no sech heaps ob oranges."

"My frien', low 'me ter say I's a s'pectable merchant o' ther Bowerly, wal known in ther peanut trade an' president o' ther Free an' Enlightened Non-Potterson Shine-'em-up League. Oblige me by car'fully repeatin' w'at I said."

Poor Julius had to confess that he could not.

"Wery likely," said Bob, "but you must see I am a Alderney rooster that kin be depended on ev'ry time he crows. Eh?"

Julius admitted it.

"Then ye must know I would not lie ter ye—not fur Joseph. My frien', you shall hev them oranges, but fu'st ye must 'arn 'em. I wanten put a few questions. Ter begin onter, whar's ther folkses?"

"Dey's all in. Massa Albert was out, but he came in to attend de weddin'."

"So ole Murder is rally ter be spliced ter Rosa?"

"He's ter espouse Miss Lethroe in de bounds ob matrimony, sah."

"Julius, take my hat, fer that ree-mark takes ther fodder. Espouse! That's good. I'll present that word ter Stumpy. He's jes' dead-gone on Daniel Webster's directory, an' he'll stick ter 'espouse' ef his wig blows off. But this ain't biz. How long afore ther obsequies takes place?"

"Very soon. Dey is in de parlor now."

"They is, hey? Who?"

"Marse Murdough, Albert, Dora, Miss Lethroe an' de minister."

"Um! Kin I git a look in 'thout bein' see'd?"

Julius hesitated, but he thought of the oranges and decided that it could be done. He led the way up-stairs through a hall and into a small room, and then pointed beyond.

"Look froo' de door, but be werry careful. Dey is dar."

Bob looked.

"Right yer be, Julius. Thar is a solemn-looking individooal who is promably a parson; an' thar is Albert and Dora; an' thar is Rosa, ez brazen ez a ticket-spec'lator in front o' a theater—an' they hev got a gall like ther Palisades, in size—an' thar is ole Murder, jes' ez chipper ez an undertaker. B'gosh! ef gittin' married ex'cises sech a malev'lant infloence over a chap, I won't never—Hello!"

Alexander Murdough had suddenly arisen and started for the small room, and the two boys had no time to retreat. All they could do was to dodge into the darkest corner of the room—no light was burning there—and hope for the best.

Bob felt Julius quake, however, when Murdough struck a match, reached up and lit the gas.

The place thus became perfectly light.

If Murdough looked their way, discovery was inevitable.

He *did* look their way, and then stood dumfounded. That Julius should be there was not strange, but Murdough recognized Bob, and his face actually paled with fear and anger.

"You here?" he gasped.

"I am, ez you may diskiver. I hev dropped in ter attend ther obsequies, Murder, ole stock, an' it'll jes' do me heaps o' good ter see yer tied up ter High-heeled Moll—I mean Miss Reddington-Lethroe!"

The young detective knew that it would do no good to mince matters now, and he went ahead with a rush. He spoke loud enough to be heard by the clergyman, for he had an idea that that gentleman might be the means of saving him from harsh usage, if not from death.

"You scoundrel!" cried the master of the house, starting forward, "I'll throw you out of the house!"

"Hol' on, Murder, ole boy!" cautioned Bob. "Ther wu'st thing you kin do is ter offer me voylence, an' I'll prove it."

The speaker slipped past Alexander, into the room with the surprised listeners to the altercation.

"Albert, my callow youth," he then continued, "I wanten put a good-sized flea inter yer right ear, an' ye kin bet high that I'm sound on ther goose. This hyar obsequy has got ter be stopped. 'Cause why? Ther blushin' bride an' groom ain't w'at they advertise ter be—not fer Joseph! Miss Lethroe ain't no sech mild-eyed gazelle, but she's a female sharper commonly knowed ter ther p'lice ez High-heeled Moll, an' she's a tough—Hol' on, Murder, ole boy; hol' on!"

The master of the house had advanced, but Bob agilely retreated behind the portly parson.

"Keep yer distance, Murder, fer I've a word ter say ter you. Albert, mebbe you've heard o' one Cap Golden, ter wit, namely; but dunno who he is. Wal, thar he stands; him an' Murder is identicle!"

Bob leveled his index finger at the counterfeiter chief, and that man, suddenly bereft of all nerve, dropped into a chair heavily.

"But that ain't all, by a matter o' several miles. Murder may be Murder, but he ain't Alexander Murdough, ther nabob. Not any, fer Joseph! He's a seum an' tramp, w'at hes usurped ther place o' ther right heir several centuries ago, an' he's kept ther real Murdough shet up in a garret ez a slave, makin' bogus money fur ther gang over which he ruled as Cap Golden, b'gosh; an' ef ye wonder, Albert, why Cap Golden hez seemed so rabid ter lead you in crooked paths, you kin understand now. 'Though Golden is Murder, Murder ain't A. Murdough, nor he ain't your dad—not fer Joseph!"

Bob poured forth this revelation with remarkable rapidity, and Albert's face was a panorama. He heard, understood and believed, impossible as the charge seemed, but it would take too much time to record all he felt and thought.

He was all awake, however, and when Cap Golden started up, revolver in hand, and tried to aim at Bob, Albert flung himself upon him.

At the same time there was a tramp of heavy feet beyond. Wrixley, becoming alarmed for Bob, had sought and obtained entrance, and he and his men promptly took charge of Golden and "Miss Lethroe."

Dora and the clergyman were amazed, while Albert actually shed tears.

"I've been a weak, weak fool!" he exclaimed. "I have let this man, in his disguise as Golden, lead me step after step in crime, little suspecting who he was. Officer, tako me, too, for I was of the counterfeiting band!"

"No," said Wrixley. "It is clear you have been made a cat's-paw by bigger knaves, and young Bob and I have arranged to let you go free. I hope other officers will be as lenient, for I believe there is hope of your reformation."

"Yas," added Bob, "an' ef you don't do it when ye hev sech a daisy o' a sister, you orter be ducked in a sewer."

"I solemnly swear that I *will* reform!" declared Albert.

"K'rect fer bristle-back fishes! Keep yer blind eye on that goal an' you'll git thar sure ez preachin'. You've had sorter a hard row ter hoe, an' ther weeds hez sprung up amazin', but that's 'cause ole Murder went out on ther sly an' watered 'em afore you war up a-mornin's. Oh! don't be skeered fur ther future; you'll be all hunk when yer see w'at a patriarchal nabob yer real dad is, an' I'll hev Ther Coiner an' yer

young sister hyar ter-morrer afore ther mud is dried up in ther Bowery!"

The boy detective had made no mistake. The clew to the mystery which he obtained from Jack Huntsman's words in the saloon was verified.

"The Coiner" was the real Alexander Murdough.

His story may be told in a few words.

When a young man he married a poor girl secretly; his proud father learned all; Alexander was unjustly accused of crime and forced to flee the country. He left his wife and two children, Albert and Dora, behind. The wife died, and the elder Murdough took the babes home.

After two years, word came to Alexander in Italy, where he was hiding, that his father was dead, and that he thus became heir to much wealth. He resolved to return. Unluckily he had in Venice become attracted to a man of his own age. Their remarkable resemblance was responsible for the acquaintance at first, but it grew so friendly that Alexander told Justin Tompkins all about himself.

When the good news came, Tompkins resolved to play the old trick of assuming another's identity. He had Alexander imprisoned, and, himself became young Mr. Murdough. He did not venture to return to New York for five years. When he did, nobody suspected the fraud.

It might never have been suspected had the usurper been wise, but he was not. The real Alexander was held prisoner, but, after a time, the usurper had actually married the daughter of his jailer and had another child.

Tompkins scented danger. If the jailer had permitted this marriage, treachery must also be intended. Tompkins paid a flying visit to Italy. One night he and Bravos descended on the cottage. The jailer and his daughter were killed. The real Alexander and Nelva were brought away.

The usurper resolved to have Murdough under his own eyes. He was brought to New York, and as Tompkins knew of his skill, the counterfeiting scheme was thought of. For two years the prisoner refused to work, but solitary confinement drove him to it at last.

To save himself from going mad, and to be with Nelva, he yielded. Then began his career as "The Coiner."

Where it would have ended but for brave Bob o' the Bowery it is hard to say, but when the man restored to life recovered his mental vigor, as he did, fully, and established his claim as Alexander Murdough, he forgot no one, good or bad. He helped to give justice to all the counterfeiting gang.

Cap Golden, Gnarl Riddle, Jack Huntsman, Chug Bates, Jocko, Hannah, and the others, all got long terms in prison. Unless Golden is pardoned, which is not likely, he will not outlive his heavy sentence.

Albert's career of folly was overlooked, and it is believed his reformation is complete. His father has given him a home, and Dora will help him keep his good resolutions.

"The Coiner" seems to have taken a new lease of life, and Nelva is the sunshine of his latter days.

He rewarded Bowery Bob financially, and would have done more had not that young gentleman declined.

"Much obleeged ter you, but I reckon ez how I'll stick to my present occupation. Peanuts is a toney trade, an' thar is piles o' bullion inter it. Thank you, but I'll keep ther Bowery stand; fur Stumpy, my pard, must hev some means o' keepin' his blood a-flowin', an' he's jest a hummer on peanuts. He could run a stan' ez big ez a dry-goods store, so I'll let him hev that line, while I look erround fer ter see w'at crookedness I kin unravel. Ther firm o' B. Bowery, Vidocq & Co. is young, but it's bound ter spread like ther measles. Thar is plenty o' field fur detective work in ther village o' New York, an' while ther measly crooks is raisin' Cain wi' honest folks, I ain't goin' ter sot down in sloth an' fossil idleness—not fur Joseph!"

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,
98 William Street, New York.